

THE INFLUENCE OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD
PROGRAM ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:
PERCEPTIONS OF FORMER HEAD START PARENTS

By

STACEY CROFT

Bachelor of Science in Special Education
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
1989

Master of Science in Applied Behavioral Studies
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
1997

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Dissertation Approved:

Dr. Katherine Curry

Dissertation Adviser

Dr. Bernita Krumm

Dr. Ed Harris

Dr. Pam Brown

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Name: STACEY CROFT

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A key component of effective early childhood programs is collaborative relationships between schools, families, and the community (Fiese, Eckert, & Spagnola, 2005). One of these early childhood programs, Head Start, stands out among the others in its efforts to work with children, families, and communities to promote parental involvement. Some families whose children enroll in Head Start continue involvement throughout the elementary years, and others do not. What is not known is parent perceptions of school factors that sustained parent involvement throughout the elementary years. This study uses purposeful sampling techniques to concentrate on a sample of past Head Start parents whose children have progressed into both early elementary and elementary school. Data were collected from Head Start and non-Head Start parents (both involved and uninvolved) from grades K-5. Additionally, administrators from the Head Start program, the Early Childhood campus, and the Elementary campus were interviewed in this study to identify perceptions of the influence of Head Start on sustained parental involvement. Findings suggest that school factors, such as a welcoming environment, leadership efforts to promote involvement, and communication with parents about how to be involved as the child progresses in grade level, encourage sustained involvement. This study provides researchers, school leaders, and parents with understandings for sustained parental involvement. This study supports findings in current research on the ongoing need to recognize school and leadership factors that can both enhance and discourage parent efforts for involvement.

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CHAPTER I

School Reform and Parental Involvement

One of the primary emphases in the United States continues to be school accountability to promote academic excellence. As a result of this emphasis, finding ways to enhance student success continues to dominate the field of educational research. Scholars in educational research strive diligently to detect influences that promote and assist in the development of student success at every level. One such influence supported strongly in educational literature and in accountability legislation such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) involves collaborative partnerships between schools and parents. According to findings in the literature, partnerships can facilitate a shared vision of student success (Epstein, 1994) and encourage parents and educators to work collaboratively to reach educational goals. Additionally, research suggests that a strong partnership between the home and school has a statistically significant, positive effect on student outcomes (Adams, Forsyth, & Mitchell, 2004; Borba, 2009; Creswell, 2003; Crew, 2007; Ferguson, 2005; Westmoreland et al., 2009; Woyshner, 2003).

Importance of Early Childhood Programs

In addition to the benefits associated with parental involvement, research also

documents the importance of programs that address the educational needs of children during their preschool years. For example, a study by Nitecki and Chung (2013) emphasizes the importance of supporting emergent literacy in preschool programs as a vital component in reaching the needed progress toward a state's rigorous testing requirements. The focus of the study centered on "connecting literacy concepts to the child's experiences to make them meaningful" (p. 54). This study utilized 14 preschool classrooms that demonstrated many positive components of emergent literacy. These components included developmentally appropriate books, accessible materials, print-rich environments, and various literacy-based lessons as well as group and individual activities relevant to the students' prior knowledge and background. Nitecki and Chung (2013) contended that preschool standards should be balanced with developmentally appropriate expectations for emergent literacy, including play, if the standards are approached as expectations that can be integrated within a child centered, play-based curriculum.

According to understandings concerning early childhood intervention, scholars agree that the foundation for literacy begins at home during the early preschool years (Fullan, 2007; Henry, 1996; Steinberg, 2004). Research indicates that Early Childhood intervention promotes school readiness and promotes a successful foundation for a child's educational journey (Barnett, 2001; Wright & Willis, 2004). According to Ferrandino and Tirozzi (2001), children learn more quickly during the first few years of childhood than any other time. These first five years of childhood are critical and key to a child's long-term development (Ferrandino & Tirozzi). Early childhood students who received intervention entered school and were noted as having higher academic skills than those students who do not receive early intervention (Barnett, 2001; Karoly, Kilburn

& Cannon, 2005; Ramey & Ramey, 2004; Schweinhart & Weikart, 2006) and were noted as continuing to progress at a relatively higher rate of success throughout elementary school (Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, & Barnett, 2010; Heckman, Stixrud, & Urzua, 2006).

Significant research can be found on the effects of early childhood intervention programs on student learning (Saracho & Spodek, 2006). According to Ou and Reynolds (2006), the goal of most state and federally funded early childhood programs is to identify children who are determined to be economically and environmentally at risk and provide them and their families with the skills needed to prepare for transition to kindergarten. Children benefit cognitively, emotionally, and socially from early childhood educational programs (Administration for Children and Families, 2007).

Early Childhood Programs and Parent Involvement

Research shows that a key component of effective early childhood programs is establishment of collaborative relationships between school, families, and the community (Spagnola & Fiese, 2007). Of those Early Childhood programs, one program, Head Start, stands out among the others in its work with children and families as well as community. Often thought of as a schooling program, Head Start provides five program services including parental involvement, nutrition, social services, mental health services and health services (Lugwig & Miller, 2006). Parent involvement is promoted because home/school interaction can assist with a child's successful transition from one program to another at various stages of education. Developing a rapport with the parents at the initial phases of school can contribute to early identification of educational needs and promote basic understandings between parents and schools leading to sustained collaborative efforts between schools and families. Specifically, Head Start programs attempt to enhance parent involvement in the education of children by increasing parent

knowledge concerning the educational process, building parent efficacy for involvement, and promoting the idea that parents can make a difference in their child's education (Mantzicopoulos, 2003). Furthermore, Seefeldt et al. (1998) found while studying former Head Start parents that a parent's involvement during his/her child's transition to kindergarten was primarily due to the parent's beliefs of school climate and confidence in the ability to influence his/her child's school involvement.

Statement of the Problem

One of the goals of early childhood programs, such as Head Start, is to encourage enhanced parental involvement early in a child's life. However, some early-childhood programs are successful at encouraging sustained parent involvement of the elementary years, and others are not. While studies indicate the importance of parental involvement and the importance of early childhood education for promoting parent involvement, the influence of early childhood programs on sustained parent involvement throughout the elementary years is not well understood. Little is known about long-term effects of early childhood programs on parent involvement or factors that impact a parents' participation and ultimately determine a parents' involvement over time. For example, some parents whose children were enrolled in an early childhood program remain involved in their children's education, and others do not. A better understanding of factors that influence the involvement of parents after leaving an early childhood program could inform early childhood programs concerning their parental involvement goals and potentially lead to successful parental involvement throughout a child's educational experiences, including transitions through elementary, middle, and secondary education.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the influence of

an early childhood program, Head Start, on parent involvement during the early elementary years. Additionally, this study will seek an understanding of factors that influence the involvement of parents, whose children have completed the Head Start program, during the early elementary years. This understanding will assist educational leaders in their efforts to enhance partnership efforts, and could potentially advance the scholarship on factors that influence sustained parent involvement.

Research Questions. Three main questions are the focus of this study:

1. How do parents whose children were formerly involved in this early childhood program describe their involvement efforts in their child's education?
2. How did involvement in this early childhood program, Head Start, influence parent choices for involvement?
3. What factors, during the child's progress in elementary school, have either helped or hindered parent involvement?

Definition of Terms

Early Childhood Education Programs

Early childhood education programs are programs available for children prior to the age of formal school entry, including preschool and kindergarten programs (Hanson, 2008).

Head Start

Head Start is a federal program aimed at boosting the school readiness of low-income children by providing preschool education and health and nutrition services (Head Start Program Facts, 2015).

Parental Involvement

For the purpose of this study, parental involvement (often referred to throughout this paper as PI) was defined as parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children (Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Parent Role Construction

Parent role construction is defined as a parent's belief about how he or she should contribute to their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2005).

Parent Self-Efficacy

Parent self-efficacy refers to a parent's beliefs in his or her ability to act in ways that will produce desired outcomes. Parent self-efficacy has been identified as a significant influence on people's goal selection, effort, persistence, and ultimate goal accomplishment (Bandura, 1986, 1997). "Parents base their participation on a variety of factors, such as comfort level, knowledge, self confidence, motivation, and language

skills” (LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011, p. 121).

Theoretical Framework: Parent Role Construction and Self-Efficacy

Because the Head Start program emphasizes the parent’s role in the educational process and the parent’s ability to make a difference in his/her child’s education, the conceptual framework used in the study is Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (1995, 1997) theory of parental involvement. This theoretical framework identifies three key factors that influence parent choice for involvement: parent role construction, parent efficacy and parent perceptions of invitations for involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (1995,1997) model outlines parent motivation to become involved in the educational development of a child. The model presents assumptions of why parents become involved, the forms of their involvement, and how their involvement influenced students’ educational development from a psychological perspective (1995, 1997). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s goal was to explain the process of parents’ involvement and the influences that parent involvement had on a student’s academic success (1995,1997). Walker et al. (2005) revised Hoover Dempsey and Sandler’s’ original model by introducing psychological factors that underlie parents’ involvement behaviors. Specifically, parental role construction and self-efficacy comprise parents’ motivational beliefs. Walkers’ beliefs that parents’ perceptions of specific invitations for involvement from the child, as well as the child’s teacher make up the general invitations for involvement from the school. The second broad construct of the revision is that parents’ perceptions of invitations for involvement come from others. The third general construct is parents’ perceived life contexts: parents’ perceptions of their available time and energy and specific skills and knowledge for involvement (2005).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model is comprised of five levels that identify four psychological factors that contribute to a parents' decisions to become involved: parent role construction, parent self-efficacy for helping the child succeed in school, parents' perception of a general invitation for involvement from the school, and a parents' perception of a general invitation for involvement from a child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). The revised model (Walker, et al., 2005) adds the dimension of contextual factors (time, energy, parent perception of invitations from school and child) that can potentially influence parents' choice of involvement.

Significance of the Study

This study will provide a better understanding of parent perceptions of the influence of early childhood intervention on their involvement efforts. Current research supports the importance of early learning for enhanced student success, and the importance of parental involvement for enhanced student success. Little is known about the influence of early childhood intervention on parent involvement practices. According to the research, scholars agree that the foundation for literacy begins at home during the early preschool years (Fullan, 2007; Henry, 1996; Steinberg, 2004). Research indicates that Early Childhood intervention promotes school readiness and a successful foundation for a child's educational journey. Early Childhood students, who receive intervention, enter school with higher academic skills than those students who do not receive early intervention (Barnett, 2001; Karoly, Kilburn & Cannon, 2005; Ramey & Ramey, 2004; Schweinhart & Weikart, 2006). Those same students were noted as continuing to progress at a relatively higher rate of success throughout elementary school (Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, & Barnett, 2010; Heckman, Stixrud, & Urzua, 2006).

This research study plans to provide critical information from a parents'

perception that identifies factors that influence parental involvement in a child's education. This intent of the research is to advance valuable information to both educators and administration on ways to build parental involvement efforts in schools.

Limitations

The study is limited to parents of children in one school district who attended Head Start in the past. Thus, this study will not be generalizable to parents in other school districts. Findings of this study will provide an in-depth analysis of parent experiences in the sampled district to aid in understanding. Caution must be taken when relating these findings to other districts, particularly those districts with different demographics, culture, and context. Interview responses can be vulnerable to misunderstanding by the researcher or the participant.

Participation in this study will be strictly voluntary. Therefore, those who respond may actually represent the more involved parents in the school, and it may be difficult to recruit the participation of less involved parents. This limitation will be addressed through purposeful sampling. Building administrators will be asked to provide the names of involved and uninvolved parents whose children have attended the Head Start program. Additionally, building administrators will be asked to identify involved parents whose children have not participated in Head Start.

Another limitation is that research suggests that schools do not always recognize those parents who consider themselves to be "involved parents" (Spera, 2005). Therefore, it is well recognized that parent perceptions and administrator perceptions may differ dramatically. However, I believe this factor adds to the complexity and the richness of data collected in this case study.

Parent education and income levels may vary significantly and may influence parenting practices being used with his/her child. Furthermore, because this study was conducted with a voluntary participation survey, participants may not represent an equal proportion of income levels of the school district.

While my teaching experiences have never included working with Head Start students, one might assume an ethical dilemma involving my past experience in education and could consider these experiences as a limitation of this study. In a qualitative study, I must position myself as the primary data collection instrument. I have taught special education for twenty-seven years in northwest Oklahoma. I have had numerous titles including elementary, middle, and high school special education teacher, Title 1 teacher, special education director and federal programs manager. My connection with Head Start over the years has been limited to the responsibilities of a special education director of collecting child count and other data for reporting to the Oklahoma State Department of Education for my various schools.

My educational experience and responsibilities throughout my career have not involved work with the Head Start programs or children at any of the four schools where I was previously employed. Additionally, the school selected for this research study does not include previous acquaintances or colleagues.

The participating school for this research study was chosen based on the location of the district and the fact that the Head Start program has been in existence in Oklahoma for more 50 years. A school from southwest Oklahoma was selected to ensure that there were no connections between myself and any families or teachers involved in the

research study.

Summary

Chapter I introduces the significance of parent /school partnerships for enhanced student achievement and outlines the contributions of early childhood programs for encouraging parent involvement at a very early age. The statement of the problem is provided, and limitations of early childhood programs to promote sustained parent involvement are introduced. Chapter 1 also provides the purpose and significance of the research for schools, the primary research questions, definition of terms, and limitations of the study.

Chapter II of the study provides a review of the literature on parent involvement and early childhood programs. Included in the chapter is the influence of early childhood programs on sustained parent involvement throughout the elementary years. Also included in Chapter II is a discussion of the conceptual framework.

Chapter III describes the research design and methods. Justification for choice of methods is presented. Included in this chapter is a description of the sample and use of strategies and tools for gathering and analyzing data.

Chapter IV will present findings from the analysis of data.

Chapter V will discuss findings through the lens of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theory of parental involvement (1995,1997). The chapter will conclude with implications for research and practice.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This literature review provides an overview of relevant literature concerning two important concepts addressed in this study: parent involvement and early childhood programs as a foundation for developing student literacy. The literature review is organized in a manner that helps the reader understand the relationship between these two concepts. The literature review concludes with an overview of one specific early childhood program, Head Start, that was developed with enhanced parent involvement as one of its primary objectives. Specifically, the topic of parental involvement addresses the following areas: historical background of parental involvement, parental involvement activities since public education began, the influence of legislation on parental involvement, and benefits of parent involvement. The topic of early childhood education will address the following areas: history of early childhood education, importance of early childhood education for learning, relationship between early childhood programs and parental involvement, and an overview of one specific early childhood program, Head Start, and its goal to enhance parent involvement.

Historical Background of Parental Involvement

The importance of parent involvement in a child's life has been well understood for centuries. Historically, philosophers such as Comenius, Locke, Rousseau, and Froebel placed a dramatic emphasis on the significance of the parent's role in a child's development. Comenius (1592-1670) believed that education began at home with the

family being the first teachers. Comenius' ideas on the importance of parent participation in a child's education helped lay the foundation for present day philosophy of the vital importance of parent involvement in the educational development of a child. John Locke (1632-1744) believed that the family must provide learning experiences for the child during the first few years of life in order for the child's mind to develop (Berger, 1991). Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) concentrated on the mother's ability to cultivate and mold the child's mind through nurturing to build potential for knowledge acquisition. John Pestalozzi (1746-1827) expanded on Rousseau's theory and added manipulatives that were utilized by adults in order to teach children. Rousseau referred to the child's environment as a manipulative in which the child might learn from in order to become a productive adult. Pestalozzi's focus was on the use of real life connections and the role of parents to teach children. These theorists played a significant role in influencing education and understanding the parent's role in child development and the educational process (Berger, 1991).

Despite the common understanding of the importance of parents for child development, specific understandings of parental roles have changed over time. Braun and Edwards (1972) claimed that, historically, families have been responsible for issues of social and early educational development of their children. Until the establishment of early education programs in the nineteenth century, families provided the socialization necessary for children to function successfully in society. In addition, parent training also had utilitarian value. According to Cutler (2000), parents initially became involved in their children's education by helping to teach them to perform everyday life responsibilities. For example, parents taught girls to sew while boys were taught to farm and hunt. These parent/child interactions formed a foundation for future learning and

cognitive development as the child modeled parent behavior and developed new skills and abilities.

However, changes in society over time have led to changes in parent/child interactions. These changes have created a situation in which parents and children do not always interact in ways they have in the past. Additionally, changes in society mean that parents do not always understand or embrace the importance of parent/child interactions for child development. For instance, during the colonial times, homes were considered the first classrooms, as parents/families were recognized as the child's first teachers (Moles, 1993; Spring, 2005). Parents were in full control of the educational decisions for their children (Morgan, 2011). However, in the last 100 years, parent perceptions of their responsibilities have changed and, as a result, home-school relationships have changed as well (Barr, 2005). Industrialization as well as secularization during the nineteenth century contributed new concepts in education (Shankoff & Phillips, 2000). These changes have led to increased situations where both parents work outside the home and an increase in the numbers of children spending time in daycare (Dubeck, 2002). As a result, the dynamics of the family's role and responsibilities coupled with the demands of the workforce have added to the changes in parental involvement in a child's life. Specifically, both parents were working outside the home, a greater number of children were attending childcare, and the number of latchkey children had increased (Dubeck, 2002). Ultimately, these changes are believed to have contributed to variations in trends in both schools and parental involvement activity within schools.

Trends in Parental Involvement since Public Education Began

According to Baker (2013) the public education system of the 21st century transpired from both political and social activities that began in the 19th century. Webb

(2006) contended that the *Massachusetts Education Law of 1642* was the first educational law in American education. This law, supporting both literacy and social order, assigned selectmen from each town to determine whether parents were providing their children an education. The selectmen assigned to assist with this decision were obligated to determine the child's ability to "read and understand the principles of religion and the capital laws of the country" (Webb, 2006, p. 69). It became evident at this time that some parents were not able to teach their children to read and write. The parent of a child unable to meet these guidelines could be fined, or the child could be taken away from the home and provided an alternative form of education (Baker, 2013). Webb (2006) contended that the passing of this law was the first enactment of legislation regarding compulsory education. This period was marked as a time for schools and homes to share the responsibility of educating the child (Cutler, 2000).

Prior to the Industrial Revolution in the mid 18th and early 19th centuries, children in the United States grew up in an environment structured around the social and economic organization of the American family (Coleman, 1987). Until the mid 19th century, parents continued to have a great deal of authority in the decisions involving their children's education. Issues involving the selection of teachers as well as curriculum were considered the role of parents (Epstein, 2001). Additionally, small communities served as home for parents as well as for teachers to live and help contribute to the natural development of relationships between the home and school. These relationships aided in a shared vision concerning educational goals (Stout, 2009).

Epstein and Lee (1995) contended that by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, "the school began to distance from the home by emphasizing the teachers' special knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy" (p. 24). Formally educated teachers began to

replace the everyday lessons conducted by parents. The parent's role in the academic process changed (Hadley, 2007). Expectations of the family were to continue to teach behavior, ethnic, and religious values at home while the school concentrated on curriculum (Morris, 2009). Additionally, the parent/teacher communication/interaction about student progress was replaced by formal report cards (Hadley, 2007). Furthermore, schools as well as communities began to increase in size. Responsibilities once overseen by the community were replaced by the development of local school boards (Morris, 2009). As a result, school administration was given the responsibility of taking charge of the daily operations of the schools. Parents filled with opposition began to protest these newly changed educational processes. However, this shift in power as well as in responsibility resulted in an even larger separation between the home and school (Hadley, 2007).

The 1960s were notorious for a profound division between schools and parents (Cutler, 2000; Fuller & Olson, 1998) as a result of Civil Rights issues (Hadley, 2007). For example, Supreme Court Decisions in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), put a strain on the relationship between parents and schools. During the 1960s, parents continued to boycott schools because of the decision reached by the United States Supreme Court in *Brown vs. Board of Education* declaring segregated schools as unconstitutional.

Berger (1991) contended that by the 1970s an increase in federal funding and mandates involving parent involvement surfaced. Parental involvement on school committees and on school boards began to increase. Although these opportunities offered limited opportunity for authentic parent engagement, they were a step in the direction of true parent/school partnerships. The 1980s marked a time of more parent involvement in

the educational system (Feurstein, 2000). Additionally, the quality of education was under great scrutiny for having “lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them” (U.S. Department of Education, 1990, p. 11).

According to Martinez (2004), the 1990s to present day legislation have continued to support higher standards for school accountability and student performance on state testing. As a result, increased expectations from state and federal education departments have mandated school efforts for increased participation from parents in the educational system to promote student success. The influence of legislation on parent involvement is discussed in the following section.

Influence of Legislation on Parental Involvement

In 1980, a presidential commission of corporate as well as public leaders and educators compiled the report, *A Nation at Risk*. (Results of this report were published and available to public in 1983). This report highlighted performance of America’s students compared to countries around the globe. The report summarized the “rising tide of mediocrity in education which threatened our very future as a nation” (U.S. Department of Education, 1990, p. 11). The report concluded that American children were falling behind and stated that America had become “lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them” (p. 9). Spelling (2008) concluded from the report that America had become “self-satisfied about our leading position in the world” (p. 2). In response to the perception that American schools were not preparing students to compete globally, graduation requirements were increased throughout the nation, and educational leaders and policy makers engaged in discussions of a lengthened school year and state testing requirements.

School reform that followed placed greater decision-making power in the hands of local school councils made up of parents and community members (Feurstein, 2000).

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan responded to *A Nation at Risk*. Reagan argued that one contributing factor to low student performance was the lack of parental involvement in education (U.S. Department of Education, 1990). Therefore, parent involvement in education became an even more important focus of policy makers and educational leaders.

By 1989, President George H. W. Bush stimulated a discussion of educational concerns with numerous governors. This discussion led to the establishment of six (later increased to eight) national goals to enhance student performance. One of these goals was the required testing of American students in the areas of math and science by the year 2000. Other goals included the idea that all children in America would start school ready to learn; high school graduation rates would increase to at least 90 percent; American students would leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, math, science, history, and geography; every adult American would be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; every school in America would be free of drugs and violence; and schools would offer a safe, disciplined environment conducive to learning (Stout, 2009).

Based on the outcomes of President George H. W. Bush's initial discussion with governors, the 1990s saw the generation of state mandated curriculum, performance standards and testing as well as teacher, student and principal accountability systems. According to policymakers, these goals are best accomplished through cooperative efforts between parents and schools (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). In contrast to the 1980s,

the 1990s brought more authentic collaboration and partnerships between schools and parents (Stout, 2009). This collaboration came with the National Education Goals (1994) as President Clinton signed the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*. *Goals 2000* included eight National Educational Goals that established a framework of academic standards to measure student progress and to support students' progress toward completion of the identified standards. The eighth goal of the National Educational Goals, "Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" (U.S. Department of Education, 1994), led to the increase in mandated parental participation in schools in order for schools to qualify for federal funding (Paula, 1995).

Despite increased attention to parent involvement in legislation, relationships between parents and schools showed little evidence of change (Allington & Cunningham, 2007). In response to the previous failure of school reform efforts, another attempt was made to reform education through a focus on improving the entire school rather than a narrower focus on particular subject, programs, or instructional techniques (Fullan, 1991). Congress passed the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) Act of 1997 (Desimone, 2002). These changes to Title 1 initiated school wide education reform with the intent of encouraging improvement in the educational development of all students (Desimone, 2002). For example, the program was expanded to include not just services to early childhood education programs, but also programs for upper elementary as well as junior high and high school students that would increase overall student abilities in the areas of Math and Reading. CSRD provided additional funding through grants to schools that adopted school wide reform and required schools to meet meaningful parent-community involvement standards. Guidelines included employing a

parent liaison, holding parent workshops, and developing parent centers as well as initiating a yearly parent compact (Desimone, 2002). These guidelines were issued as mandates to schools using Title I funding to assist in enhancing parent involvement in the educational process.

The Clinton administration and the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* assisted in the distribution of funds to schools for what was outlined as the organization and development of a partnership with parents in an effort to promote social, emotional, and academic growth of the child. Legislation that followed the *Goals 2000 Act, No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), further assisted in the building of relationships with parents and creation of stronger communication efforts with parents. NCLB also provided unprecedented opportunities for parents to take an active role in their children's education.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB), passed in 2001 and signed into law by George W. Bush, was initially created to address government officials' concerns with children entering school "ready to learn." A provision of NCLB was to address the importance of educators working with families and communities in effective partnerships (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Consequently, schools were inspired, through NCLB, to increase their efforts of parental involvement in a child's education (No Child Left Behind (NCLB) 2002). For example, "NCLB acknowledges that parents play an integral role in their children's learning, and that they should be given the opportunity to act as full partners in their children's education" (Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005, p.4). According to NCLB, the purpose of the act was to "to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards

and state academic assessments” (U.S. Congress, 2001). A primary means of achieving the purpose of NCLB was to include parents in the educational process. The text of NCLB states, “This purpose can be accomplished by . . . (12) affording parents substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children” (NCLB, 2002). Zuna (2007) contended that although parental involvement provisions exist within NCLB, implementation has been troublesome. NCLB mandates schools have written policy for parental involvement. However, the provisions are not enforced and schools that fail to develop parental involvement policy are not held accountable (National Coalition of Parental Involvement, 2004).

Types of Parental Involvement Activities

According to Cotton and Wikelund (2006), parental involvement refers to a multitude of activities where parents participate in the education of their children as well as in their children's school(s). For example, parents participate in their child's education as a volunteer at school (i.e., classroom volunteer), teacher's aide, or tutor. Other parents assist with fundraising, attend field trips and participate in parent/teacher conferences. Additionally, parents help with their child's homework, provide their child an adequate study space at home, model desired behaviors such as reading at home, and encourage their children to do well in school (Cotton & Wikelund, 2006; Halsey, 2004).

Epstein (1984, 1985, 1994) developed a six item classification system that has proven beneficial to the research development of a typology of parental involvement; the system includes school-home communication, home learning activities, parents as decision makers, monitoring and supervisory activities, and parental involvement in the school and in the community. Becher (1984) contended that Epstein's classification system can assist parents in learning the various ways they can become involved as well as how they, as parents, can help their child reach enhanced achievement goals.

Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, Whetsel, and Green (2004) also supported that parents engage in a variety of activities that promote student academic learning. Through the "establishment of basic structures for homework to more complex efforts focused on teaching for understanding and helping students develop effective learning strategies" (p. 1), these researchers supported the importance of a parent's involvement in a child's education. Walker et al. contended that there are eight ways that parents should involve themselves in a child's homework. These include 1) interact with the student's school or teacher about homework, 2) establish physical and psychological structures for the

child's homework performance, 3) provide general oversight of the homework process 4) respond to the student's homework performance, 5) engage in homework processes and tasks with the student 6) engage in meta-strategies designed to create a fit between the task and student knowledge, skills, and abilities, 7) engage in interactive processes supporting student's understandings of homework and 8) engage in meta-strategies helping the student learn processes conducive to achievement (p. 2).

Henderson et al. (2007) supported that minority parents of low socio-economic status, who lack in education and whose cultural backgrounds and social values differ from school officials, often find difficulty in fully engaging in their child's education. Such differences cause educators to view the parents as lacking the necessary skills and competencies to assist their child in academics (Epstein, 1995; Nieto, 2004).

Jeynes (2011) contended that parents of color and low-income status often participate more than what educators realize. Many times, educators look for the parent's participation in meetings and miss the things that parents do at home. Research indicates that the subtle aspects of involvement go unnoticed at times; these subtle aspects (parents' high expectations of their child, strong communication bonds with their children) are considered more important than more overt actions by parents (Jeynes, 2007, 2010).

Continued efforts to identify the activities defined as "parental involvement" have shown that a variation in meaning of parental involvement exists between schools and parents as well as educators. Additionally, research suggests that there are varying understandings among parents about what it means to "be involved" (Ladner, 2006; Reed, Jones, Walker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2000; Sheldon, 2002). Regardless of the

definition used in the literature, research supports the idea that parent involvement promotes student success (Epstein & Sanders, 2002).

Benefits of Parent Involvement

The importance of parental involvement has gained considerable attention in the literature (Banks, 2002; Goldberg, Rueda, & August, 2006; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Jeynes, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2004), and benefits of parental involvement are recorded in the literature (Barnard, 2004; Epstein, 2001; James, 2008; Jeynes, 2007; Key, 2006; Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008; Marzano, 2003). According to the meta-analysis of studies conducted by Fan and Chen (2001), the literature supports the benefits of parent involvement. Additionally, a meta-analysis conducted by Castro et al. (2015) also supports parental involvement in a quantitative study of parental involvement and academic achievement. Castro et al. conducted 37 studies in kindergarten, primary, and secondary schools between 2000 and 2013. One conclusion of the studies supports a higher number of parental involvement models are linked to high school achievement. For example, a parent's general supervision of the child's academics such as expectations for the child, development and maintenance of communication with the child about school activities, and help with the development of reading habits are linked to a student's academic achievement. Parental actions such as involvement in decision-making, interaction with teachers, and helping with homework can lead to further educational achievement for the child (Long, 2007).

E. C. Brooks (1916), who conducted the first known study on the effects of parental involvement on a child's academic development, agreed with Comenius's position on the importance of the parent's impact on a child's academic development. He stated,

Where parents are capable of guiding the child and are inclined to supervise the home study, their children succeed in school. But where the parents are illiterate or for other reasons are unable to supervise the home study, their children as a rule either make slow progress or are failures. (Brooks, 1916, p. 193)

Henderson and Mapp (2002) determined that there is a “positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement” (p. 24). For example, research supports that children whose parents are involved in their education are inclined to perform better than other students whose parents do not participate (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Epstein, 2001; Steinberg, 2004). Additionally, Epstein (2009) conducted a study of elementary students’ math achievement scores. Epstein found a significant increase in student achievement with the addition of interactive math homework assignments completed with parental guidance. Wherry (2003) contended that parents who are involved with a child’s education help promote greater academic achievement.

Ongoing research indicates an increase in value that a child holds for education can be seen with an increase of parent’s visibility at school (Constantino, 2003; Cotton & Wiklund, 2001; Fan & Chin, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Henderson, Map, Johnson, & Davies, 2007). With this in mind, one might consider the contention of Gonzales-DeHass, Willems, and Holbein (2005) that students are more likely to assume personal responsibility for their education when their parents are actively involved.

According to Swap (1993), parent-educator partnerships offer important benefits that ultimately enhance student achievement. These partnerships create a powerful connection with beneficial supports such an increase in student achievement as well as positive student attitudes towards school and towards curriculum (Cotton & Wikeland,

2001). Research supports a correlation between student positive attitudes toward school and parental involvement (Bridgeland et al., 2008; Epstein, 1992; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1996; and Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding & Walberg, 2005). Additionally, Gay (2000) contended that parent-educator collaboration promotes harmony among stakeholders.

In addition to positive student attitudes, parent involvement also contributes to overall student desire to attend school regularly and to feel confident in schoolwork. Berger (2008), Fan and Chen (2001) and Mendoza (2003) found that an increase in students' school attendance and an increased sense of positive feelings of self are seen when the parents are actively involved in the educational process of the child. Additionally, an increase in student attitudes can lead to lower school dropout rates for students. Researchers, Popham (2008) and Stewart (2008) report lower dropout rates for students with parents who were actively involved in their education.

Jetter-Twilley, Lefum, and Norton (2007) maintained that effective parental involvement is a principal factor in developing successful students, inspiring positive learning traits in students, and assisting in reducing the achievement gap among high and low performing students. According to the National Parent Teacher Association (2000), over 30 years of research has concluded that when parents are involved in their child's education, children achieve better grades, complete homework, attend school regularly, graduate from high school, demonstrate higher attitudes toward school, and are more likely to enroll in higher education (Funkhouse & Gonzales, 1997). Hence, improving parental involvement efforts in school can improve schools (Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005).

Henderson and Berla (1994) contended that not only parents and students reap the

benefits of parental involvement, but school districts as well see rewards. Better school attendance, fewer discipline referrals, and increased student achievement were all factors seen as favorable results for the school districts. Such results have led to more positive attitudes from teachers, higher morale for the entire district as well as a welcomed positive reputation of the school throughout the community.

In sum, the benefits of parental involvement are well documented in the literature (Barnard, 2004; Epstein, 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001; James, 2008). Benefits include positive learning outcomes for children (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Epstein, 1992, 2001, 2009; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Steinberg, 2004; Wherry, 2003), an increase in value that a child holds for education (Constantino, 2003; Cotton & Wikelund, 2001; Fan & Chin, 2001; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002), an increase in the child's personal responsibility for his/her education (Gonzales-Dehass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005), an increase in parent-educator relationships (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001; Swap, 1993), an increase in student positive attitudes (Bridgeland et al., 2008; Epstein, 1992; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1996; and Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding & Walberg, 2005), harmony among stakeholders (Gay, 2000), an increase in student attendance and self- efficacy (Berger, 2008, Fan & Chen, 2001; Mendoza, 2003), and lower student dropout rates (Popham, 2008; Stewart, 2008). Funkhouse and Gonzales (1997) contended that a benefit of parental involvement is an increase in a child's likelihood to attend higher education.

The Importance of Early Childhood for Learning

Research suggests that the first few years of a child's life and early educational experiences are vital to a child's development in school (Baker & Roth, 1997; Barnett, 2001; Wright & Willis, 2004). These years are considered the foundation of the child's

future health, growth, and development (Ferrandino Tiraozzi, 2001; Hepburn, 2004). “Preschoolers seem to race from one milestone to the next. Nevertheless, the rate of growth and development among young children varies greatly” (Kostelc & Koprowski, 2001 p. 12). For instance, learning to read is believed to begin at infancy and extend beyond the first years of school. Shared reading with family has been found to increase a child’s oral language and vocabulary development (Phillips & Lonigan, 2009). Tarelli and Stubbe (2010) contended that such efforts of reading at home support the importance of parental modeling of positive literacy practices that extend well beyond early childhood years.

A study by Nitecki and Chung (2013) indicates that understanding the importance of supporting emergent literacy in preschool programs is vital in reaching the needed progress toward state academic standards. The focus of their study was “connecting literacy concepts to the child’s experiences to make them meaningful” (p. 54). The authors further stated that the relevance of parental participation focuses on developing a rapport with the parents at the initial phase of school. This rapport can contribute to the identification of ground level educational needs of the student as well as the past experiences of the child that might lend insight into what educational approaches should be used to benefit the child most. Although the importance of early learning is well-documented in the literature, children across the nation do not experience equitable learning opportunities because of fewer material resources in the home (such as books and trips to the public library), differing rates of mobility (lack of affordable housing and homelessness), levels of parental education, access to high quality early childhood programs and child care (absence of educational field trips and educational resources), degree of English proficiency, single parent families, and lower rates and quality of

parent involvement (Barberis, 2008). Because learning opportunities differ greatly across children in the United States, early childhood programs were established to meet the needs of children at an early age so that all children enter school with a solid foundation to begin their formal educational experiences.

Planty, Hussar, Snyder, et al. (2009) reported that in 2009, 67% of the four-year-old children in the United States were enrolled in some form of early childhood program. While the purpose of early childhood programs was to provide educational opportunities for young children from impoverished homes (Scarr, Weinberg, & Levine, 1986), by the 1970s, preschool programs were not just for low-income families who needed care. Additionally, middle-income families found early childhood programs to serve a growing need for childcare due to women entering the workforce (1986). Middle-income families were also enrolling their four-year-old children in early childhood programs because both parents had gone to work.

Benefits of Early Childhood Programs

The benefits of early-childhood programs are documented throughout the literature (Baker Roth, 1997; Barnett, 2001, Wright Willis, 2004). Early childhood programs can enhance a child's readiness for school and promote future academic success (Barnett et al., 2008; Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, Squires, 2012; Isaacs & Roessel, 2008; Kostelnik & Grady, 2009; Schweinhart, 1994). A quality early childhood center (defined by the National Association for the Education of Youth Children (NAEYC, 2005) as a program that promotes physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of the children's parents, staff, and administration involved in the program) supports optimal learning and development (Marshall, 2006), promotes school readiness, enhances verbal ability, and decreases the likelihood of reading difficulties later in school

(Butin, 2000).

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and Collaborative Communication Group (CCG) (2005) suggested that programs such as Parents as Teachers (PAT) and Pre-K as well as other early-childhood programs may help reduce the need for retention or remediation as well as help close achievement gaps. NAESP and CCG (2005) suggest that strong early learning can lead to better-educated students who will require fewer remediation efforts throughout their educational careers. Spokespersons for both organizations convey that it is crucial that all children have an opportunity for intellectual, social and emotional growth (NAESP & CCG, 2005).

Parents As Teachers (PAT) conducted a study in the fall of 1998-2000 that involved 5,721 children from Missouri who participated in the PAT program as well as other early-childhood programs (Pfannenstiel, Seitz & Zigler 2002). Through this study, the impact of early childhood services on a child's school readiness was evaluated. These same children (82% of the original kindergarten sample group) took the third-grade state assessment four to five years later. Their performance on state assessments at the end of the third-grade supports that both direct and indirect effects of PAT was evident from the test results (2008). PAT contended that studies indicate that the PAT home visit program is supportive of student readiness and academic achievement (2008).

Klein (2002) contended that children who enter school with solid family relationships, age-appropriate social skills, and school readiness skills, such as an understanding of cooperation, are more likely to experience success and enjoyment in the learning process. Powell et al. (2010) supported this theory that a child's transition from home to a preschool program is a vital step that marks the beginning of an important relationship between home and school. Therefore, this initial stage of school, early

childhood learning, can be a golden opportunity for the development of parental involvement efforts (Arnold et al., 2008). These efforts have proven to be beneficial to the improvement of a child's academic, behavioral, and social outcomes (Powell et al., 2010; Senechal, 2006).

History of Head Start

The Office of Economic Opportunity first started Head Start, a comprehensive child and family development program, in 1965. Head Start has been noted as being the largest federally funded program in the United States focused on early childhood education and care (Zhai, Raver, Jones, 2012). For example, as part of the War on Poverty, Head Start programs provided preschool, health and other social services to poor children age three to five and their families (Health and Human Services, 2006). Head Start's aim is to increase school readiness of low-income students by providing preschool education as well as health and nutrition services (Puma, et al., 2010). Head Start programs were initiated as a result of evidence that lower class children were educationally disadvantaged (behind academically) as compared to other students when they entered elementary school.

In 1965, the Office of Economic Opportunity's Community Action Program (CAP) launched an eight-week summer school program designed to serve those students not ready to progress to kindergarten. This program, Head Start, was designed to prepare disadvantaged children across the nation for school entry and allow them to find educational success. The goal for the first summer school readiness program, planned for 100,000 children, was to prepare them for kindergarten entry. The intention was to assist the children in overcoming the experience of poverty and to prepare them to receive the full advantages of the school experience (Vinovskis, 2005). In the "President's Report to

the Nation on Poverty,” the White House announced plans to spend \$50 million for Head Start’s summer school classes and stated that they had budgeted \$150 million for a year-round Head Start program for the 1966 fiscal year (Health and Human Services, 2006; Vinovskis, 2005).

The Head Start program began with a much larger enrollment than had been anticipated, a result thought to be in response to the then-current conditions of poverty (Vinosvski, 2005). “Educational needs of post World War II America were influenced by societal shifts” (2005, p. 84). One example of this influence was that educators experienced difficulties in keeping up with the educational demands of the post-war baby boom. Additionally, the 1960s brought much needed attention to the students with disabilities as well as the students who lived in poverty. This new focus on domestic policy brought educational focus and an urgency of improving the education of those living in poverty (Vinovskis, 2005).

What followed much deliberation and planning was twenty-five hundred, summer Head Start programs operated out of eleven thousand Child Development Centers. Such programs helped over five hundred and thirty thousand low-income students attend summer school in 1965. These students received summer school training to assist in preparing them for kindergarten the following September. Furthermore, they received much needed medical and dental attention. Additionally, parents received counseling services to strengthen and improve their home environments. The total cost was estimated at between \$84 million and \$150 million.

In August of 1965, President Johnson announced funding for the year-round Head Start programs to begin that fall. Although there was skepticism about continued enrollment for both programs, summer and year-round, increases per year in enrollment

for summer sessions and year-round sessions of Head Start were seen. Enrollment for the year-round sessions increased from 20,000 in 1965 to serving 160,000 in 1966 and 215,000 children participated in 1967. In 1968, the phenomenal growth began to stabilize with an enrollment of 218,000 students in the year-round program.

Head Start Services

Over the past forty years, Head Start has served more than 24 million families with preschool children from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Head Start offers education, health, nutrition, mental health as well as social services (Health and Human Services, 2007). Other programs under Head Start, include but are not limited to, Early Head Start (a federal program begun in 1995 for low-income pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers), Migrant Head Start (programs serving migrant families), and American Indian Head Start (programs designed to serve Indian populations).

The Head Start program, designed to facilitate opportunities for the parents to participate in school, has six service components: early childhood education, parental involvement, nutrition, social services, mental health services, and health services (Currie & Neidell, 2006). These six components are intended to provide schooling outcomes not only through the indirect effect of early childhood education, nutrition, and health services, but also through influential involvement with parents' schooling attainments or parental practices (Ludwig & Miller, 2006).

Head Start, a public assistance program, determines eligibility based primarily on family income. Following income, age is used as a determinant with priority given to four-year-olds over three-year-old children. For example, with the focus of Head Start being school readiness, the four-year-olds are determined as first priority to serve to assist

in school readiness by age 5. Head Start also uses family risk factors to assist in program placement. For example, if a three-year-old has such a risk factor as a single parent, or parent(s) with less education, that child may take precedence over another child for admittance into the Head Start Program.

In 2011, Lee contended that the Head Start bureau was attempting to expand the program so that additional students can be admitted in the program. However, lack of evidence on who should be included in the expansion of enrollment delayed such decision (2011). A shortage of funding is also a detriment to the current expansion of Head Start (2011).

Benefits of Head Start

The benefits of Head Start are well documented in the literature (Love et al., 2005; Puma, Bell, Cook, Heid, & Lopez, 2006). Findings suggest that children who attend Head Start had increased outcomes in reading and math as well as fewer reported socio-emotional behavioral problems than students who did not attend Head Start. Studies on Head Start programs show that one or two years of Head Start can improve a child's school readiness, early scholastic achievement and overall curriculum development (Love et al., 2005; Puma et al., 2006). Such skills assist with lower incidence of grade retention and lower special education placement (Reynolds, Temple, & Ou, 2003). Positive behavioral as well as social skills were also noted (Niles, Reynolds, & Roe-Sepowitz, 2008; Tankersley & Kamps, 1996).

The Head Start REDI (research based, developmentally informed) Program of 2008 is one example of the benefits of Head Start. REDI used intervention strategies to target the promotion of specific school readiness skills in the areas of social-emotional development (pro-social behavior, emotional understanding, self-regulation, and

aggression control) as well as cognitive development (language and emergent literacy) (Bierman et al., 2008). Such intervention methods included brief hands-on lessons, extension activities, as well as specific teaching strategies linked to the promotion of social-emotional competencies, language development, and emergent literacy skills. The REDI Program used multi-method assessments to evaluate 356 four-year-olds over the course of 1 year. Conclusions of the study showed significant differences that favored children outcomes in the areas of vocabulary, emergent literacy, emotional understanding, social problem solving, social behavior, and learning engagement.

The Civitan International Research Center (2002) noted the advantages of Head Start Programs including significant gains in student cognitive performance. Head Start students were noted as more likely to receive preventive and remedial services such as medical and dental care, vision and hearing screening, and had improved family-school collaboration and stronger family self-efficacy characteristics. A study conducted by Reid, Webster-Stratton, and Beauchaine (2001) known as the Incredible Years reported that the most significant advantage of Head Start Programs was the parenting intervention that promoted more positive, less critical, more consistent, more involved as well as more competent parenting skills.

Bonnet (2007) also noted that evidence was relevant in showing that Head Start students had language and literacy scores that fell below the nation's average when entering the Head Start Program. An improvement was seen in the academic skills of Head Start students at the completion of the first year of the program. The results of Bonnet's (2007) study indicated an influx in child ability that was contributed to an increase in parental involvement following a child's enrollment in Head Start.

Relationship Between Early Childhood Programs and Parental Involvement

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in the United States is comprised of a variety of half-day, full-school day, and full-work day programs. These programs include educational, social welfare, and commercial supports. These programs are based on both public and private programs and focus on either “care” or “education”; sometimes the programs focus on both.

The preschool years are an opportunity for parental involvement trends to be established and an opportunity for parents to acquire knowledge and training on what skills children need prior to entering kindergarten and starting elementary school (Domina, 2005). Preschool programs such as Head Start have been identified as providing a comprehensive educational program with a focus on school readiness (Lee, 2011). However, Head Start programs also provide opportunities for parents to improve their parenting skills, knowledge, and understanding of the educational as well as the developmental needs of their children (Chang, Park, & Kim, 2009).

NAEYC’s (1995) supported the promotion of parent involvement through Head Start by stating, “Early intervention services provide families with an array of comprehensive support services to help them provide the rich environment so critical for early learning of the children. The federally funded Head Start program is an example of this type of program (p. 3). These programs provide inclusive services to ensure that a wide range of individual needs are met, they reinforce parents’ roles in supporting their children’s development and learning, and provide a wide variety of firsthand experiences and learning activities either directly to children or through parent participation” (NAEYC, 1995, p. 3).

By gaining a better understanding of the influence of early childhood programs

such as Head Start on parental involvement during the early elementary years, educational leaders could potentially advance the scholarship on factors that influence sustained parental involvement. Studies such as Barberis' (2008) study on Head Start Directors and their leadership styles support the need to identify factors that influence parental involvement.

The primary focus of Barberis' study followed five students and their families through the transition from Head Start to Kindergarten. This study emphasized the parent's ideas of what factors influence his or her child's development and what the parent's key role was in this transition. The researcher concluded that the leadership skills of Head Start directors had a significant impact on the development of parental involvement that led to the child's success in transitioning from Head Start to kindergarten. Barberis concluded, "Head Start directors who are able to identify best practices need to engage their parents using a collaborative process" (p. 43). With these efforts come more favorable results and better parent participation.

Barberis (2008) contended that Head Start directors are the "driving force" behind the success of Head Start programs (p. 43). The director's ability to identify beneficial parent's needs, to effectively communicate with parents, and to promote parent's participation in decision-making processes help create a welcoming environment for parents. Examining preschool programs such as Head Start allows researchers the opportunity to review the importance of parental involvement and determine what factors have helped enhance the lives of low-income parents and their children (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992).

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework used in the study is Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's

(1995, 1997) theory of parental involvement. This theoretical framework identifies three key factors that influence parent choice for involvement: parent role construction, parent efficacy, and parent perceptions of invitations for involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995,1997) model outlines parent motivation to become involved in the educational development of a child. The model presents assumptions of why parents got involved, the forms of their involvement, and how their involvement influenced students' educational development from a psychological perspective (1995, 1997). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's goal was to explain the process of parents' involvement and the influences that parent involvement had on a student's academic success (1995,1997).

The model is comprised of five levels that identify four psychological factors that contribute to a parent's decisions to become involved: parent role construction, parent self-efficacy for helping the child succeed in school, parent's perception of a general invitation for involvement from the school, and a parent's perception of a general invitation for involvement from a child (Hoover-Dempsey Sandler, 1995, 1997). The revised model (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005) adds the dimension of contextual factors (time, energy, parent perception of invitations from school and child) that can potentially influence parents' choice of involvement. Figure 1 provides additional information about the model developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler as revised by Walker et al., 2005.

Figure 1.1. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s Theory of Parental Involvement

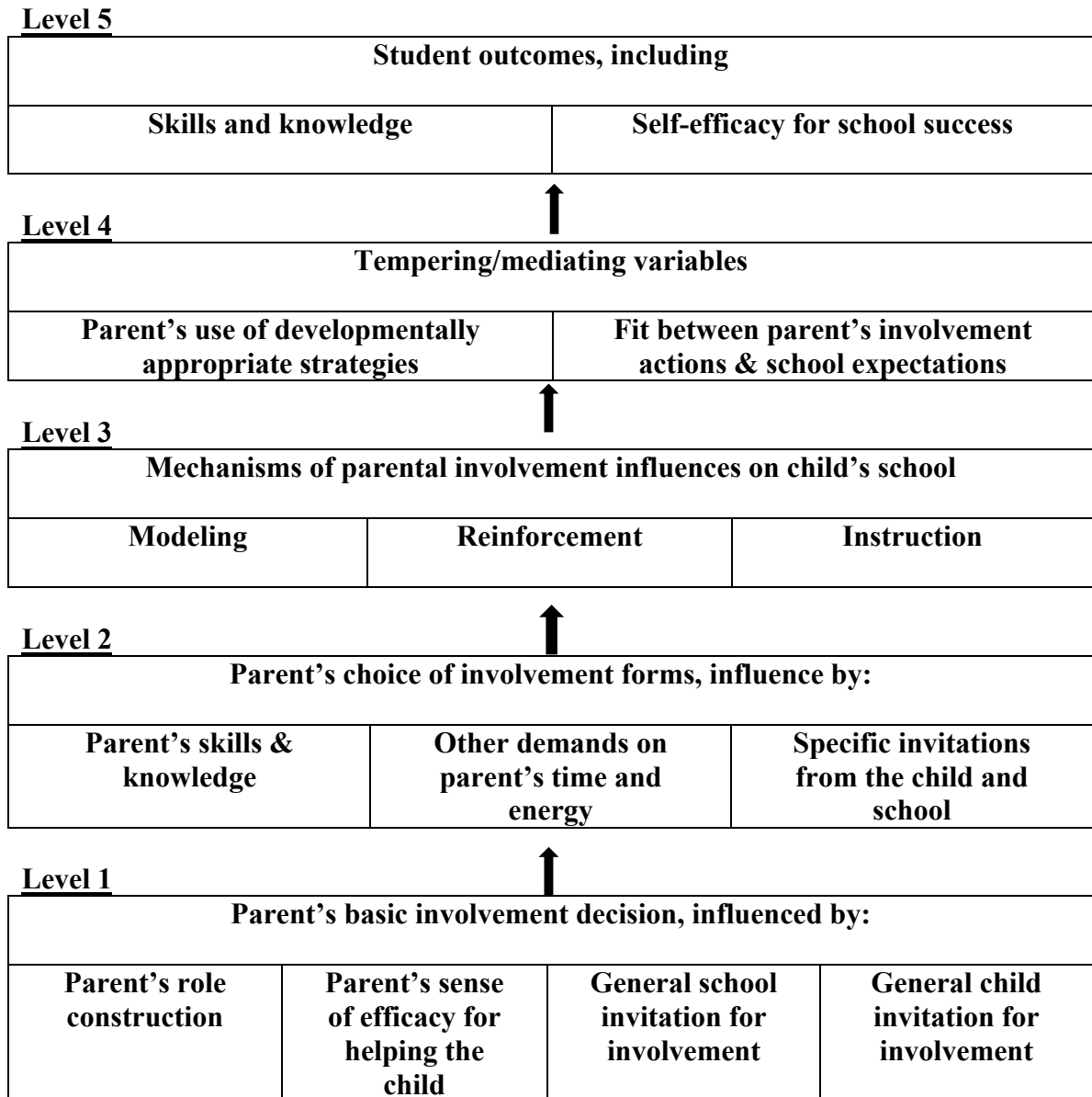


Fig. 1.1-Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (1995-1997) original theoretical model of the parental involvement process

Parent Role Construction

A parent's perception of his/her role in a child's educational development is vital to the success of a child because role construction influences the actions that a parent chooses to take regarding a child's education. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) suggested that parent role construction comes from parents' ideas about their roles conceived primarily through observation and modeling of their own parents' history of involvement, as well as other people's involvement that they have witnessed. Parents use modeling, either intentionally or unintentionally, to "set the stage" for what practices they may use in their own parent involvement efforts (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Parent role construction can be influenced by a parent's past experiences or beliefs (Hareven, 2000). Additionally, a parent's doubt associated with role construction in their child's education can lead to confusion and possible reluctance to participate in future parent involvement efforts (Adams, Forsyth, & Mitchell, 2009; Bandura, 1997; Bettler & Burns, 2003; Lawson, 2003).

Parent Self-Efficacy

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) maintain that parent role construction is not the only important influence on parent choice of involvement activities. A parent's sense of efficacy for helping their children reach school success is equally as important. James (2008) conducted a study to prioritize the effects of a parents' educational background, socio-economic status and ethnicity on a student's academic successes. James' study concluded that although research may indicate that parent's education background, SES, and ethnicity can negatively affect the academic development of a child, parental involvement as a whole can have a greater influence on the academic

development of the student. James also noted that parent perception of involvement showed significant relationship to parental involvement.

Parents' self-efficacy and role construction can greatly impact their involvement efforts. A meta-analysis conducted by Fan and Chen (2001) noted a strong relationship between parental aspiration and a student's academic achievement. When parents believe, and support a child's education, students also see hope and value in education (2001).

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model was selected to guide this study with the understanding that self-efficacy and role construction stems from parent perceptions of invitations from children as well as invitations from the schools for involvement which can lead to an acquired form of involvement comparable to his or her precise skills and knowledge, demands of time, and specific requests from children and the school.

Summary

The nation's emphasis on school accountability to promote academic excellence is supported in the literature by an intense focus on the detection of influences that promote and assist in the development of student academic success at every level (Adams, Forsyth, & Mitchell, 2009; Borba, 2009; Creswell, 2003; Crew, 2007; Ferguson, 2005; NCLB, 2001; Westmoreland et al., 2009; Woyshner, 2003). This literature review outlined the importance of two primary influences in a child's life: parent involvement in education and early learning opportunities. Concerning parent involvement, findings suggest that collaborative efforts of educators and parents can ultimately facilitate a shared vision of student success (Epstein, 1995) and can encourage educator/parent partnerships to work together to reach educational goals. This literature review documented findings in the literature that support the positive effects of such partnerships

on student outcomes (Adams, Forsyth, & Mitchell, 2009; Borba, 2009; Creswell, 2003; Crew, 2007; Ferguson, 2005; Westmoreland et al., 2009; Woyshner, 2003).

Concerning early learning experiences, this literature review addressed research that documents the importance of programs that address the educational needs during the early childhood years (Nitecki & Chung, 2013). For example, emergent literacy in preschool programs is vital in reaching the needed progress toward the state's rigorous testing requirements. This literature review also documented findings that support the importance of early childhood intervention for school readiness and a successful foundation for a child's educational journey. Additionally, findings were presented that suggest that early childhood students who receive intervention through preschool programs enter school with higher academic skills than those students who do not receive early intervention (Barnett, 2001; Karoly, Kilburn & Cannon, 2005; Ramey & Ramey, 2004; Schweinhart & Weikart, 2006). Continued progress at a relatively higher success rate throughout elementary school was also noted (Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, & Barnett, 2010; Heckman, Stixrud, & Urzua, 2006).

Finally, this literature review identified one early childhood program, Head Start, that specifies parent involvement as one of its primary emphases. Head Start provides low-income families with resources that contribute to the entire family's development. Empowering parents in the areas of health, education, and social issues is one of Head Start's missions (Brinson, 2011). Barberis (2008) contended Head Start works to empower parents with leadership skills that lead to enhanced student success. According to Barberis (2008), Head Start directors and teachers have a significant influence on the development of parental involvement that can promote a Head Start child's success in transitioning to kindergarten.

Chapter III outlines the research design for this study for the purpose of gaining a better understanding, from parents' perspectives, of the influence of participation in the Head Start program on parent involvement. Current research lacks an understanding of how parents whose children have participated in Head Start perceive their own involvement in their child's education. Allowing the parents voice to be heard on what motivates them to participate in their child's education will add to understandings in the literature and could potentially provide practitioners with understandings about how early childhood programs influence parent understandings for involvement. Further research is needed to identify factors that influence sustained parental involvement efforts.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This qualitative case study was designed to focus on the voices of parents whose children have been involved in the Head Start program and their perceptions of factors that influence their participation efforts in their child's education. Interviews, observations, and artifacts were used to develop an in-depth understanding of parental experiences in the sample district. Caution must be taken when utilizing the findings of this qualitative study to other districts, particularly those districts that differ in demographics, culture, and context.

Qualitative Paradigm

According to Merriam (1998), "Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (p. 5). This qualitative case study uses a constructivist paradigm to explain parent perception of the influences of the Head Start program on their parental involvement practices. According to Yin (2009), case study research involves the study of a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting. Creswell (2013) contended that case study research is a "qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations,

interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes. Characteristics of qualitative case study research include the following: 1) the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; 2) qualitative research usually involves the researcher meeting and visiting with the participants in the study; 3) qualitative research builds on hypothesis or theories rather than existing theory; 4) qualitative studies focus on process, meaning, and understanding to produce a rich descriptive study; and 5) qualitative research is fundamentally interpreted by the researcher (Creswell, 2003, 2013).

Creswell (2003) reported that qualitative research gives the investigator the opportunity to listen to the voice of the participants. This perspective provides opportunity for actual experiences, beliefs, and values to be heard. According to Creswell, this “voice becomes a united voice for reform and change” (p. 10). The unit of analysis in a case study might be multiple cases (a multi-site study) or a single case (a within-site study)” (p. 97).

For the purposes of this study, the case represented was two schools in one district where the Head Start program is offered. The two schools included one early childhood center (Pre-K-2) and one elementary school (3-5) where students transition when they reach 3rd grade. These two schools were considered a single case because students begin in the early childhood center and then move to the 3rd through 5th grade building. So, this research study represented one school experience (system), not separate experiences, and it represents one program. This district was chosen based on the location of the district and the fact that the Head Start program had been in Oklahoma for more than 50 years, indicating a well-established program. Although no one in the district could recall when the program started, it has been more than 20 years. Additionally, the location of the

school in southwest Oklahoma was selected to ensure that there were no connections between the researcher and any families or teachers involved in the research study. The unit of analysis is parents.

Research Questions

Three research questions were the focus of this study:

1. How do parents whose children were formerly involved in this early childhood program describe their involvement efforts in their child's education?
2. How did involvement in this early childhood program, Head Start, influence parent choices for involvement?
3. What factors, during the child's progress in elementary school, have either helped or hindered parent involvement?

Qualitative Methods

Data Sources

I conducted this qualitative case study in one district in Oklahoma. The case was identified as two elementary schools: one elementary school encompassing grades 3-5 and an early childhood facility serving grades Pre-K through 2nd grade located in Southwest Oklahoma.

The target school district is a Title 1 district. Specifically, the National Center for Education Statistics shows 2014-2015 school data for the selected school to have had an overall student population of 885 students, Pre-k through 12th grade, with approximately 55 teachers and a student/teacher ratio of 16:3. There are a reported 193 students that make up the ELL population and 143 students on IEPs. The selected school reported a total of 442 male and 443 female students. The total number of students on free lunches

was 625 and reduced lunches totaled 89 students for the district, an 81% free/reduced lunch population. The student population consists of 27 American Indian/Alaskan, 5 Asian/Pacific Islanders, 93 Black, 388 White, 367 Hispanic, and 5 students of two or more races.

Data Collection Methods

Qualitative case study researchers gather data from numerous sources in order to conduct thorough analysis of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009).

Documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts are six forms of evidence often used in case studies (Yin, 1989).

Furthermore, a case study tells the story as it is with minimal theory, few causal links, and minimal analysis as case study investigation tells the story as it is (Yin, 1989).

Yin (1989) reports three overriding principles of case study that increase its quality: (a) multiple sources of evidence, (b) a case study data base (formal assembly of evidence), and (c) a chain of evidence (explicit links between the research questions, the data collected, and the conclusions drawn). In case study research, the review of literature provides a framework to identify important areas to consider. In following Yin's (2003) recommendation of multiple data sources, three data collection techniques were used in this case study.

1. Artifacts – letters, announcements, handbooks, fliers, and other school handouts. These artifacts validate and strengthen other evidence by providing specific details and are not judged based on their accuracy or lack of bias (Yin, 1989).
2. Participation Observation – observation in which the researcher assumes a variety of roles within the case study. The researcher participates in the events

being studied and develops a perception of reality (Yin, 1989). However, bias may be a risk due to situation objectivity.

3. Interviews – open-ended interviews provided deep and rich data (Yin, 1994).

Interviews were recorded, using an audio recording device, and then transcribed.

Data Collection

Prior to beginning data collection, permission was obtained from the Superintendent of the participating school to conduct research in the district. Following permission from the participating school district, the formal IRB application from Oklahoma State University Review Board was completed and accepted. Following approval, the data collection process was initiated.

Purposeful sampling techniques were used to select study participants.

Participants in interviews included nine Head Start parents and four non-Head Start parents whose children have progressed into early elementary school. Also included in the study was one administrator from each of the elementary schools (Pre-K- 2nd, and 3-5th) as well as the coordinator from the Head Start program. Each of these administrators and/or coordinator participated in individual interviews also.

Parents and administrators/coordinator participating in the study signed consent forms (Appendix C) prior to interviews. Interviews following semi-structured interview protocol were held with each participant to gain deeper knowledge and insight into parent and administrator perceptions of parent involvement in this district. The interview protocol (see Appendix D) includes a list of questions used to interview past Head Start students, non-Head Start students, and administrators. Observations of student drop off and pick up times, school activities, hallway interactions as well as the collections of

artifacts (school handbook, parental involvement policies, and various samples of school/home communication methods) were used in this study.

Participant Recruitment

The first step in recruitment of study participants was a note sent home in the child's backpack asking parents to contact me if they were interested in participating in the study (Appendix B). A total of 13 parents volunteered for participation. All volunteer names were presented to administration, and administration identified each parent volunteer as either "highly involved" (nine parents) or "not involved" (four parents). Although school administration identified four of the parents as "not involved," it should be noted that, since all participants read the note that was sent home and volunteered to participate, each of these parents was somewhat involved in his/her child's education. This factor is addressed later in the findings section of this study. Specifically, when administration identified nine parents as "highly involved" and four parents as "not involved," it can be assumed that those parents who are considered "not involved" may not demonstrate involvement in ways that are typically recognized by administration. These parents were included in this study to gain a better understanding of their perceptions of involvement in contrast to administrators' perceptions of involvement.

From this list, 13 parents who volunteered for the study were chosen to take part in this study; one additional parent volunteered and participated. The following former Head Start parents volunteered: three parents whom the administration felt were "highly involved" whose children were enrolled in kindergarten, first or second grade. This group included one more participant than the other groups simply because one extra parent volunteered. Two parents were selected for participation who were identified by the administration as "not involved" whose children were enrolled in kindergarten, first

or second grade. Additionally, two additional parents that the administration identified as “highly involved” whose children were enrolled in 3- 5th grades, and two 3- 5th grade parents, identified by administration as “not involved,” were selected for the study.

In addition to the nine parents whose children had attended the Head Start program, two parents from each school (Pre-K-2 and 3-5th) whose children had not been involved in the Head Start program were selected from the list of volunteers as participants in individual interviews. These four parents were identified by the administration as “involved parents.” Their participation allowed triangulation of data as responses from involved former Head Start parents and involved non-Head Start parents were compared.

Table 1 depicts the individual participants (assigned fictitious names) and their children (identified by number). Table 2 provides an overview of the participants in the study. Participants included biological mothers with the exception of one biological father and one couple (both mother and father). All participants were fluent in English with the exception of one mother whose primary language was Spanish. Her English was somewhat limited; however, she wanted to participate in the study. Her answers were primarily one-word answers that lacked elaboration.

Table 1
Participants-Number/Assigned Fictitious Names/Ages of Children in Their Home

Participant	Pre-K-2 nd	3-5 th	6-12 th
#1-Haven	1	0	0
#2-Hank	1	0	2
#3-Heidi	2	0	0
#4-Hanna	1	1	1
#5-Natalie	1	0	0
#6-Helen	1	1	1
#7-Hazel/Henry	2	1	1
#8-Harper	1	1	1
#10-Hope	2	0	1
#11-Nancy	1	1	1
#12-Nicole	1	1	0
#13-Nina	0	1	1
#14-Hally	1	0	0

In addition to parent participants, two principals and the Head Start coordinator for parental involvement activities were interviewed for this case study. These participants were women, and each spoke English as their primary language. While gender is not a focus of this research study, this could serve as implication for future study on understanding perceptions of men and women on parental involvement.

Table 2: Participants of the Study

Participant Category	Head Start	Early Elementary (K, 1st and 2nd Grades)	Elementary (3rd, 4th, and 5th Grades)
Former Head Start Parents		3 “Highly Involved” 2 “Not Involved”	2 “Highly Involved” 2 “Not Involved”
Non-Head Start Parents		2 “Highly Involved”	2 “Highly Involved”
Administrators	1	1	1
n = 16			

Data Analysis

The researcher is the main data collection instrument in qualitative case study design (Yin, 1994). Yin (1989) emphasizes the importance of the exactness of transcribing what participants have said. Hence, following recruitment, as well as conducting of interviews, I transcribed interviews the same week that actual interviews took place to maximize recall and to facilitate follow-up and identify gaps in the research. Following transcription of the audio-recorded interviews, I began to analyze the results of the raw data. Analysis involved not just the transcribed interviews, but also multiple reviews of the audio recordings, written notes taken during the interview process, observations, and review of artifacts gathered. Feedback, checking, and ongoing field notes were used to support and organize ongoing analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Interviews were transcribed and then coded and summarized into general descriptive categories. Pattern coding (Yin, 1989) was used to discern patterns across participants. I used open coding that involved separating the data by interview question. Next, I regrouped data by interview question and then formulated conceptual labels, assigned to the data using axial coding. I also used axial coding to develop categories and to identify emerging themes. Finally, selective coding was used that involved the

formation of themes (cross-analyzing) among subcategories that helped to identify the relationship between categories (Yin, 2009) and to answer the research questions. From the analysis of data, three themes emerged. These themes are: 1) four types of actions/activities for involvement with parenting aspiration and expectation as the most salient form of involvement, 2) leadership influences on parent involvement; task versus relationship orientation, and 3) parent empowerment for involvement. Creswell's (2003) recommendation of the use of direct quotes from participants in addition to detailed narratives of the setting to provide the reader a clear understanding of the findings is used in the presentation of findings that emerged from the data analysis for this study.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain an understanding of the influence of participation in an early childhood program, Head Start, on parent involvement during the elementary school years. Additionally, this study sought an understanding of contextual factors that influence parent involvement. Multiple sources of data were collected: interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews were audio recorded, and transcribed. Triangulation of data and member checking were used to provide trustworthiness to the findings. Open coding was utilized to identify emerging themes, perspectives or categories. A concept map was used to gain a better understanding of the relationship and interconnectedness of themes that emerged. The theoretical framework of Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Sandler's (2005) model of parent involvement was used during analysis to explain the findings. Chapter IV will discuss the data collected and will provide analysis of the findings.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

Parental involvement research has evolved from previous studies focusing on the analysis of family structure and family functioning (Jeynes, 2010) to a more holistic approach to gain a better understanding of interactions between schools and families. In more recent years, social scientists have advanced research out of a desire to gain a better understanding of the influence of external factors, such as parental involvement, in the education of students (Jeynes, 2011). Much is known about the benefits of parent involvement (Barnard, 2004; Epstein, 2001; James, 2008; Jeynes, 2007; Key, 2006; Mackety and Linder-VanBerschot, 2008; Marzano, 2003), and researchers and policy makers widely support parent involvement as a means to enhance student outcomes. However, while schools emphasize parent involvement as a means to reach educational goals, an anomaly exists because efforts to promote parent involvement are successful in some instances, and in others they are not. A potential explanation of success or lack of success may be attributed to school factors, such as involvement in an early childhood program, that influence parent motivation for involvement in elementary school and beyond.

An early childhood program that has as one of its goals to increase involvement of parents is the Head Start program. Head Start recognizes the importance of parent involvement for student success (Berk, 2009; Bruckman & Blanton, 2003). However,

parent involvement after completion of Head Start remains inconsistent with some parents persisting in their involvement efforts and others discontinuing involvement after completion of the Head Start program. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the influence of this early childhood program, Head Start, on parent practices of involvement during the early elementary years and on the influence of school factors, after completion of Head Start, that either promote or inhibit continued involvement. This study potentially could assist educational leaders in their efforts to enhance partnership efforts, and it also could advance scholarship on factors that influence sustained parent involvement as students progress from an early childhood program into elementary school. The purpose of this chapter is to present findings that emerged from analysis of the data.

Setting

This qualitative case study was conducted in one school district in Oklahoma. The case is identified as two elementary schools: one elementary school encompassing grades 3-5 and an early childhood facility serving grades Pre-K through 2nd grade located in Southwestern Oklahoma. The town encompasses 5.0 square miles. According to the 2000 census, approximately 4,500 people, 1,800 households, and 1,200 families reside in this town (www.census.gov/2010census) in a Midwestern state. The population density was approximately 930 people per square mile. The racial makeup of the city includes 68.04 percent white, 11.32 percent African American, 2.8 percent Native American, 0.43 percent Asian, 0.04 percent Pacific Islander, 13.85 percent other races, and 3.52 percent two or more races. At the time of the study, the median household income in the town was \$22,190, and the median family income was \$28,724.

This district consists of three schools: a high school, middle school, and an

elementary school. The elementary school is housed in two separate buildings with two different administrators. The early childhood elementary school (Pre-K- 2nd grade) is located in what can be considered the center of town, and the 3rd - 5th grade elementary building is located several blocks away on the north side of town. Likewise, the Head Start program resides in two different locations. The three-year-old program is located near the high school (northeast side of town), and the four-year-old program is on the same campus as the early childhood elementary school (Pre-K-2nd grade) near the center of town. The location of the four-year-old program, on the same campus as the Pre-K – 2nd grade elementary school, is designed to allow smooth transition between the Head Start program and early elementary. Table 3 describes demographic characteristics of the research population.

Table 3
Research Site Characteristics Comparison
Category Prek-2nd Grade
Elementary 3rd-5th Grade
Elementary Head Start

Category	Prek-2 nd Grade Elementary	3 rd -5 th Grade Elementary	Head Start
Average ADM	470	179	26
# of certified staff	41	36	14
# of Free/Reduced Lunches	391	124	26
Local \$ Spent per Student	\$9,703	\$9,703	\$7,097

The early childhood elementary school, where data were collected, is located in a housing area in the central part of a small town in a Midwestern state. This school (Pre-k-2nd) shares the city block with the middle school. The frontage street to both schools is controlled through one- way access during school hours to aid in traffic flow and to provide enhanced safety for the students. The early childhood elementary school, as well

as the four-year old Head Start program are located two blocks east of the main access road through town and the business district of town. Banks, convenience stores, grocery, and farm supply stores are located on this highway making accessibility to shopping and local business easily attainable from the school setting.

All doors are locked daily for security purposes. Visitors enter near the cafeteria, which often doubled as the gathering place for programs and special events. Two hallways that ran north and south led to the secretary's office and check-in location for all visitors. Early childhood classrooms (Pre-K and Kindergarten) were located in a wing to the south of the visitor check-in. A small couch was available, for visitor comfort while they waited in the office, on a wall adjacent to the secretary's desk. The office areas (both principal's and secretary's offices) could be accessed from either of the two school hallways. Visitors using either of the two hallways had access to the administration and school secretary.

The first and second grade programs are located in a new school addition (separate building) west of the cafeteria. Students, faculty, and guests use a covered walkway to transition from the main building to the newly built addition. This new addition not only includes first and second grade classrooms but also a new school library. Outside doors are locked for student safety. Keys and photo badges on lanyards are utilized by teachers/administration for easy access and identification while transitioning from one building to the next.

Interviews

The interviews conducted for this study took place at the early childhood campus (Pre-K-2nd grade) in a room next to the principal's office and adjacent to the secretary office. Participants entered the school through the main entrance located near the center of the main building. I stood and greeted the study participants as they entered the room to ensure rapport and to convey a feeling of encouragement for participating in the study. Participants consisting of all biological mothers, except for one biological father and one couple, appeared somewhat nervous as they entered the room and as I extended the invitation of a hand shake. It was as if they were anxious about taking part in the study. Each participant and I sat at a round table in the middle of a small room that was filled with teacher workroom equipment (copier, laminator, paper, etc.). The room was a comfortable temperature and was quiet. The slight sound of voices from the office and from the hallways could be heard.

Participants of this study were identified throughout this dissertation by fictitious names. Former Head Start parents were given names that begin with the letter "H". Non-Head Start parents were given names that begin with "N". Consistently throughout this study, participants were referred to by their assigned fictitious names.

I began each interview by thanking the parents for participating in the study and I reviewed the Adult Informed Consent form (appendix C) with each of the participants. Following the signing of the consent form, I asked the first interview question. Parents appeared more comfortable as the interviews began and heard the first couple of interview questions concerning their children and school experiences. Parents appeared to be proud of their school and wanted to boast about their child's teachers and administration. All participants, with the exception of one, appeared to understand the

questions and feel confident in their answers. One Hispanic mother, Hanna, who appeared to speak limited English was slow to warm up to the interview process. Hanna's initial answers to the first couple of interview questions were short and communicated with little if any detail. However, further into the interview, when asked questions concerning her role in her child's education, Hanna began to speak with more detail and smiled as she spoke of the encouragement that she gave her child.

The one biological father who participated in the study, Hank, was especially nervous at the beginning of the interview and seemed to laugh a lot and gave short answers. Following the first two interview questions I stopped and commented that I could tell that he was nervous as he was sitting very erect in his chair and rubbing his hands back and forth on his knees. Hank then told me that he had never been in an interview before. His face turned very red and he laughed a little. I took a few minutes and asked Hank about his work and he told me that he had farmed all of his life which explained never having interviewed before. Our conversation helped him feel more comfortable and helped him open up and speak freely about his experiences as a parent. Hank was a divorced dad who shared the responsibility of raising his two daughters with his ex-wife (a teacher at the participating school). He commented that his involvement increased a great deal following the divorce. As the interview progressed, Hank talked more freely and explained his respect for the school and all the faculty.

When asked what their role as a parent was in their child's education, participants would smile and think for a second. Words such as "encourager," "cheerleader," "to push," and "to encourage" would be communicated by parents while wearing smiles. It was evident that participants began to feel more comfortable with each interview question. When asked how their involvement efforts had been encouraged, parents began

to speak with great admiration for the early childhood administration (Head Start and early childhood programs). The participants love and adoration for the early childhood programs in the participating district was very apparent in the answers given. These leaders (Head Start and early childhood) had made a great impression of their devotion to the children within the district and in making the parents feel welcome in their child's education. Parents testimony of the early childhood principal standing in the drop off and pick up lane each day before and after school giving their children high five and visiting with parents each day spoke volumes for the buy-in that had been created by excellent communication skills of the participating district. Participants spoke with sincere admiration of the time that the early childhood principal devoted to making each of them feel "important" and "needed" in their child's educational process. Smiles, laughter, and endless stories replaced the nervous smiles and anxious feelings that were initially seen at the start of each interview. Further details of findings organized as per each research question are presented in the pages that follow.

Findings

The first research question in this study asked *How do parents whose children were formerly involved in this early childhood program describe their involvement efforts in their child's education?* Important responses that address Research Question 1 are provided in Table 1 and lead to the emerging theme: four common involvement actions described by parents with parental aspiration and expectation as the most salient form of parent involvement.

Forms of Involvement

Similarities were identified across participants' responses when asked about their current involvement efforts in their child's education. All participants, even parents who

were identified as “not involved” by administration in this study, identified homework, volunteering, holding high expectations, and attending school events as areas that they, as parents, are currently involved.

Table 4
Head Start and non-Head Start Participants Responses

Parent involvement efforts In their child’s education	# of Interviews 13	% of 13 Interviews
Homework	12	92%
Expectations	12	92%
School Events	13	100%
Volunteering	10	77%

Table 4 represents common responses among the thirteen participants concerning their involvement efforts. Twelve of the thirteen parents (92%) interviewed (including both Head Start and non-Head Start parents) indicated that they were involved in homework with their child, and all parents who participated in the study indicated that they attended school events, indicating that their perception of their role in education includes help with homework and attending school sponsored events to support the education of their children.

Additionally, of the thirteen parents who participated in this study, twelve parents (92 percent) emphasized the fact that they serve as an encourager for their child’s educational endeavors. The term “expectation” represents various responses used by participants to describe a wide range of actions/activities. Other terms often used by participants to describe their involvement efforts were “over-see” and “encourage.” For example, parent number one indicated that she had one son who was currently in first

grade and that he did attend the Head Start program. Haven (parent number one) said that she served as “an encourager” or “to help along side of the teachers” to make sure that her child was progressing and that he was on track. Haven responded, “I just have to say, hey, sit down and do your homework and then make sure that he does it.” When asked what she perceived her role to be in her child’s education, Helen (parent number six) reported that her role and the role of her husband was to be the “overseers” in making sure that their children complete homework assignments. Helen stated, “So, um...we’re, my husband and I, are the overseers I guess. We make sure that they (our students) get done. We are there to help them in any way.” Further analysis of the data revealed a common theme of setting high expectations/aspirations for children as the primary motivation behind other forms of involvement. For example, parents who participated in this study indicated that they “make sure that their children are progressing,” that they “make sure their children are accomplishing what he/she sets out to do,” “we, as parents, push our children,” and that they, as parents, “make sure that their children do good in life.” This understanding is important because, to 12 of the 13 parents, setting high expectations for learning served as the motivation for all other forms of involvement: helping with homework, attending school events, and volunteering at their children’s school. This finding is discussed further in Chapter V.

In addition to having high expectations for their children, thirteen of the thirteen parents (100%) interviewed (including Head Start and non-Head Start parents) referred to activities that teachers/administrators ask them to participate in such as reading with their child, various homework activities, donation of snacks or school supplies, and attending numerous school activities. Hazel and Henry (couple number seven identified by administration as not involved) indicated that they come to the school for parties, brings

things like snacks, and attends art programs hosted by individual classroom teachers.

Hanna (parent number four) indicated that she helped her children (Head Start, first grade, and 5th grade) with homework and was involved with “fun days” and other school activities. Hanna also reads to/with her children and works with them to learn shapes, colors, and numbers.

Many of the parents (10 of the 13 Head Start and non-Head Start parents or 77% of participants) indicated that they were asked to volunteer at the school and/or for their child’s classroom during the school year. Hally (parent number fourteen) laughed while stating, “they rope me into volunteering. I get to see everything. I love this school. It is awesome.” Hope (parent number ten identified by administration as involved) indicated that her volunteerism was “signing up for parties to bring snacks, Kleenex, or other items for the classroom.” Helen (parent number six identified by administration as involved) indicated that she felt that if she had not been as involved in volunteering in her children’s academics and in helping their teachers do whatever needed to be done, “they (her children’s grades) wouldn’t be what they are today.”

Observations were conducted on various days and offered support that many parents are on campus at the early childhood elementary school (Pre-K-2nd grade) throughout each day. Parent drive through during drop off and pick up times were observed. Parents walking students into the main building to check in at the central office, and parents walking students into the cafeteria, sitting with their child at the round lunch tables enjoying some together time with their child at breakfast were apparent each day of observation. Parents visiting with teachers at pick up time at the end of each day was witnessed as well as parents’ conversations with the administration, secretary, and with other parents were observed. While some parents maintained the driver position in

their car, never leaving their cars during the drive through process, others mingled around the school campus as if they were attending a social gathering.

Findings for Research Question 1 were supported through triangulation of data, primarily observations and interviews conducted with the administration. All three of the administrators in the study (early childhood Principal, 3-5th grade Principal and Head Start Coordinator of parental involvement activities) provided their perceptions of parent involvement in each of their schools.

Perceptions of the Early Childhood Principal Concerning Involvement. The early childhood principal stated that parental involvement was “a parent that is involved in every aspect of their kids’ life. She expanded her thoughts by including parents that are home when their children get home from school, have a meal for them, and that help their children with homework, make sure they have a bath every night, and “normal, everyday things like that.” The principal from the 3-5th grade building stated that parental involvement involves “anything that helps the student succeed in the school and anything that the parents can do to help their student.” The Head Start coordinator stated that her definition of parental involvement is “to involve the parents in the everyday learning of the Head Start program.” It is important to note that although these administrators described their parents’ involvement efforts in a holistic manner (similar to parent descriptions), the administrators did not recognize some of the normal everyday things that parents mentioned during their interviews as involvement efforts. In fact, some of the parents were identified as “not involved” even though these parents identified themselves as “involved” parents.

When asked to describe parental involvement efforts in their school, the early childhood principal (Pre-K-2nd grade) claimed that while the school has good parental

involvement, she would like to see even more participation than they currently have. She feels that the early childhood school has more parental involvement because of the age of the students that they work with. Her understanding is that the parents look at their children of that age and still consider the children to be “babies.” Based on field observations, the early childhood principal feels a real need to “build the parents’ role within the school.” She explained that she works very hard to promote participation and parents’ overall sense of involvement through the construction of the parents’ role within the school. For example, parents are asked to take part in special events and activities throughout the year by sending notices and reminders home in backpacks, by hanging posters as reminders throughout the school, and by making phone calls, leaving text messages, and all school reminders. The early childhood principal stated that she schedules events that involve all members of the families (Muffins with Mom, Doughnuts with Dad, Lunch with Grandparents, etc.) at various times throughout the day to accommodate varying schedules.

Elementary Principal’s Perception of Parent Involvement. The principal of the 3-5th grade school explained that she promotes parent involvement through opportunities such as parent/teacher conferences, open house, “meet and greet,” and the use of parent volunteers. These parent volunteers work with individual students with reading and other tutoring activities. The parent volunteers also assist with the donation of items of need (clothing, school supplies, etc.) as well as transportation to and from after school events. As previously stated, the 3rd through 5th grade school principal feels that parental involvement is “anything that helps the student succeed in the school and anything that the parents can do to help their student.” Her technique for getting the parents involved is to allow the parents the opportunity at enrollment time to fill out a survey volunteering

for certain events and duties provided on the list. For example, parents are given opportunities to volunteer for parties, for tutoring, or to serve as homeroom mothers. That list is “kept all year and then when we need someone, we just go to the list and call them.”

Head Start Coordinator’s Perception of Parent Involvement. The Head Start coordinator indicated that their program has a high rate of parents volunteering within their program. She explained that Head Start promotes parent involvement using parent volunteers to read, work in the communities, Head Start activities, and monthly parent meetings. The Head Start program also utilizes a parent survey at enrollment time. However, instead of selecting from a provided list, the parent is asked to write in an area that he/she might be interested in receiving training in, what their individual interests are, and if they have any skills. For example, the Head Start coordinator explained, “maybe they want to sing, play the guitar, have animals to bring and share with the children.” The Head Start coordinator stated that this survey “helps us plug the parents in where they are needed and allows us to see what they (the parents) can do and what their skills are.”

Document Analysis. The collection of artifacts took place on my visits to the participating district. Elementary parent handbooks, copies of notes, flyers and mailings were collected and served helpful in compiling data for this study. Although the elementary parent handbook was found to be very literal and uninviting to parents, it did serve the purpose of an information source for parents to refer when they had specific questions. However, sections that actually pertained to the content of this research project lacked invitation and warmth to the reader. For instance, the definition of parental involvement read, “Participating Public School encourages parental involvement

in the educational process. The school and home have a shared goal of promoting success in our children. Our parents will be encouraged to act as advisors, resources, persons, and coordinators in the following ways: attend school events and serve as advisors, use talents/resources to enhance the instructional programs, be school supporters and advocates, and respond to memos, surveys, and questionnaires expressing ideas and concerns.”

On the contrary, fliers, notes, and posters hanging throughout the hallways at the early childhood elementary school were very inviting, and they allowed little room for a parent to overlook an upcoming event because they were displayed in prominent locations. School administration and teachers at each campus (early childhood, elementary, middle school and high school) utilize Remind text message systems to alert parents quickly and efficiently of weekly events, as well as changes to scheduling and early release when needed. Notes home in backpacks were used a great deal by the early childhood, elementary, and middle school. Both the middle school and the high school buildings had school marquee signs that posted upcoming events daily. Administrators explained that the district utilizes the local newspaper in reporting upcoming events, listing outstanding accomplishments, and posting weekly school events hosted by each school.

The Influence of Head Start on Parent Involvement

The second research question in this study was, *“How did involvement in an early childhood program, Head Start, influence parent choices for involvement?”* Significant responses identified from Research Question 2 are provided in Table 2 and help lead to the emerging theme: leadership influence on parental involvement.

Leadership Influences on Parental Involvement

Table 5 represents responses from the nine parents who participated in this research study whose children had participated in Head Start. Of the nine Head Start parent participants in this study, five (56%) indicated that Head Start influenced their instinct as parents for involvement; seven (78%) indicated that Head Start influenced their involvement efforts through encouragement; eight (89%) participants indicated that Head Start influenced awareness of the importance of their involvement, and six (67%) of the participants in this study indicated that Head Start influenced their feelings of validation as a parent. Furthermore, of the 9 participants in this study, two (22%) indicated that they did not think that their child's involvement in Head Start had an influence at all on their choice of involvement in their child's education.

Table 5

Head Start and non-Head Start Participants Responses

How did involvement in Head Start Influence parent choices for involvement?	# of Interviews (9)	% of 9 Interview
Parent instinct	5	56%
Encouragement	7	78%
Awareness of importance	8	89%
Validation of parent	6	67%
I don't think it did/Already involved	2	22%

Former Head Start parents participating in interviews for this study discussed how their involvement in Head Start influenced their choice for involvement. A sample of parent responses is included below.

From my analysis of the interview transcriptions, I surmised that first time parents benefited from the Head Start programs more than parents who already had older children enrolled in school. Second time parents expressed that they already felt confident in the area of parenting and believed that they possessed parent instinct to know how to support their child's education. However, for new parents, Head Start seemed to enlighten them in many areas of parenting. For example, parent number one indicated that her child's involvement in Head Start influenced her to be "more of a part of her children's lives" and that it "teaches parents that children need to eat healthier." Numerous parents interviewed referenced the meals that Head Start provided their children throughout their Head Start experience. Many noted the health and nutrition aspect (foods that their children ate at Head Start) in reference to Head Start training and

education. Parents also referenced all the children “sitting down together at the table” to eat and to work. This practice was noted as if this was a new concept to the families or at least it was seen as an important factor that they saw Head Start practicing with their children. Heidi (parent number three) indicated,

Head Start influenced me as a parent because since they are so involved, I think I’m a whole lot involved with him (my son) now. For instance, I see parents that tell their children to go do their homework. We don’t do that. We sit down at the table and we make sure we go over it together and we do it together. I don’t do it for him, but we do it “correctly.”

Hope indicated that, “Head Start definitely got us ready to get her (their child) into a school mode and into a school routine.” She went on to say that Head Start prepared them for what the children would be doing in Head Start and helped prepare them (the parents) for the structure of Kindergarten. “We both (parent and child) needed that.” Heidi stated that she felt like she was more involved because Head Start promoted involvement. She felt that she had learned the things to do as a parent from the Head Start experience.

Findings suggest that Head Start had differing influences on parental involvement. For some, it encouraged parents to become involved in school activities. For example, Hope, a mother of three daughters, explained how the Head Start teachers encouraged her to fulfill her role as a parent at a difficult time in her life. The family’s oldest daughter was diagnosed in early elementary school with a brain tumor. Through this experience the family dealt with “challenges” in their everyday routine that were unique to this family. “I think that the Head Start program gave my middle daughter an outlet to have friends, to have something else besides everything revolving around sister

and cancer. That was a big role for her.” When speaking of the Head Start teachers, Hope had this to say, “They are great at what they do. They encourage us to be involved. Not just at home, but up here (at school) and in their lives, as much as we can. That’s a big role here at school.” Hope’s response is important because, for her, Head Start influenced not only parent participation in school activities but also her perception of her parenting role as well.

Additionally, Hope noted that the school (early childhood elementary school) has very good communication with parents consisting of “little notes,” text message reminders as well as teachers and administration available for visits/reminders at pick up and drop off times. She explained that each of these elements serves as encouragement to the parents to be involved in their child’s education. Hope confirmed that even when parents were fairly confident about their roles as parents, the Head Start program provided much needed support during times of crisis.

Haven also felt that Head Start influenced her parental involvement efforts because the “program encouraged parents to be involved.” Heidi also agreed that the Head Start program encouraged involvement and that “they (Head Start teachers) make it a lot easier to see yourself, making yourself push them (students) to make them (students) better.” Helen (parent number six identified by administration as involved) felt that her child’s involvement in Head Start made her “more aware of what we have as a family.” It was obvious that involvement in Head Start served as an encouragement for parent number six.

Seven of the nine Head Start parents stated that involvement in Head Start helped them understand that their involvement efforts in their child’s education are important to their child’s future success. Helen stated that Head Start made them (their family) more

aware of what they have as a family. “Wow, we have these little four-year-olds going through the graduation ceremonies to go into Kindergarten and no one is here for some of these kids. Head Start made me aware of the importance of being there for my child.” Haven stated that Head Start “influences parents to be more of a part of their children’s lives, and it teaches parents that they need to be involved.”

A second-time Head Start parent, Nicole, (her oldest daughter had been in the program a few years earlier) noted, “Our second daughter attending Head Start got us back into the role of what we should be doing as parents. I got to meet and visit with other moms, and got to see what we should be doing as parents.” Although parent Nicole indicated that she “doesn’t know” if Head Start influenced her perception of her role in the education of her child, when asked how her child benefited from her participation she noted, “it made me feel good to be a part of my child’s life.” Therefore, it can be deemed from this parent’s comment that self-efficacy was strengthened for this mother by the influences of the Head Start program.

While five Head Start parents (three parents identified by administration as involved) felt that the Head Start program had a positive influence on their involvement in their child’s education, still two Head Start parents (parents identified by administration as involved) felt that their child’s involvement in the Head Start program had little to no influence on their efforts in their child’s educational process. Nicole indicated that she was not sure that Head Start influenced her involvement effort. “I can’t say that it influenced me in any way or not.” Additionally, Hally (parent number 14, a single parent new to the participating school district identified as involved), did not feel that Head Start had an impact on her parental involvement efforts. “It was a lot of what you were doing and this is how you act and I tried to take from that.” However, Hally

stated that being involved in her child's education allowed her and her child to spend more time together and that "she (the student) is more involved. She (the student) and I (the parent) are both more involved."

Support for findings related to Research Question 2 was established through interviews conducted with the administration. The three administrators who participated in the study (early childhood elementary principal, 3-5th grade principal and Head Start coordinator of parental involvement activities) provided evidence captured with audio-recorded interviews. When asked how the Head Start program influences parental involvement, the following responses were received.

Early Childhood Principal Perception of the Influence of Head Start. The early childhood principal emphasized that the Head Start program encouraged parent involvement and often provides parents individualized assistance in filling out the required paperwork. Head Start in the participating town encourages, reminds, and even provides assistance in completing and returning required documents such as required immunization records and medical/dental evaluations. The principal stated that most Head Start programs discontinue a child's enrollment when the parents don't comply with the requirements. Therefore, the early childhood principal saw this guided instruction on required paper work as a way that Head Start influences parent involvement.

Elementary Principal Perceptions of Head Start. In contrast to responses from other administrators, the elementary principal (3-5th) does not consider the Head Start program as an influence for parental involvement. The elementary principal feels that most parents, today, "really think of Head Start as more of a baby-sitting service." In other words, despite the fact that parent involvement is a goal of the Head Start program,

this administrator believes that parents use Head Start for their own needs rather than the program having a direct influence on parenting skills. She feels that the Head Start program as well as the parents would benefit from “have parenting classes, too. Especially for the four-year-old program.” This administrator feels that as the students reach school age, parents need classes on how to deal with parenting issues such as steps needed for their child to succeed in school. She reiterated her beliefs several times that parenting classes should be required at times. For example, she mentioned that parents who have children with repeated discipline referrals should have to attend parenting classes in order to help their child/children comply with school rules.

These findings suggest that a difference in perception between elementary administrators and Head Start personnel exists regarding parent training for involvement. The administrators feel that ongoing parent training is necessary. They also feel that that the Head Start program should require their teachers to hold an early childhood certificate if they are going to provide learning for children and support for parents. The administrators feel that Head Start provides an education to children in the state of Oklahoma and should be held to the same state standards as individuals who teach in Oklahoma schools.

Head Start Coordinator Perceptions of Head Start. In contrast, when interviewing the Head Start coordinator, she stated many practices utilized by Head Start that promote parental involvement. The coordinator indicated that the Head Start staff “trains the parents, helps the parents, and gives the parents resources.” She went on to say that Head Start has six family service workers on staff that provides parents with assistance with “home issues, school issues, or medical issues.” She also stated that “if none of us can find out an answer, we will do research to find an answer for them.”

The Head Start coordinator went on to say that, in terms of educational opportunities, parent meetings are held where the Head Start personnel encourage the parents to attend. At these meetings, parents are encouraged to attend school functions and to volunteer. Additionally, student assessments are conducted three times a year. Results of each child's assessment are reviewed with the parents to inform them of progress as well as areas of need that for each child. According to the Head Start coordinator, Head Start provides each parent with "ideas to strengthen the weaknesses that each child has." The Head Start coordinator contends that they try to include the parents in everything that Head Start does. Newsletters, parent meetings, and policy council (Head Starts school board) were mentioned as ways of communicating and involving the families. "We (Head Start) invite them."

The Head Start coordinator talked about the Head Start policy council which is made up of one parent member per each of the fourteen centers that meets four or five times a year. These members vote on grants, teachers, program changes, Head Start forms, and community assessments. These members assist with any changes and work collaboratively with the Head Start staff. She explained, "So, we involve the parents from the top to the bottom."

Conflicting Views of the Influence of Head Start. The early childhood principal and the elementary principal were asked how Head Start influences a parents' understanding about their role in their child's education. It was stated that Head Start attempted to get the parents to attend monthly meetings. One administrator stated, "I don't know how successful they are." It was noted that the attendance at these meetings was down. "If they don't come, there are no consequences." One school administrator stated that she felt that Head Start influences parents' understanding of their role in their

child's education by holding monthly parent meetings, sending out letters, and encouraging numerous parents to volunteer.

The Head Start coordinator, in contrast, indicated that Head Start staff encourage parents to attend monthly meetings with their families and that they also educate parents on the process of volunteering. She stated that Head Start educates parents at the beginning of each year concerning what to expect with student assessments, how to interpret results of student assessments, and what to expect at parent home visits. I was informed that Head Start also extends to the parents a list of ideas on how to strengthen areas of need in students following the review of student assessment data. For example, student assessment data is taken to home visits, allowing Head Start teachers the opportunity to review information with parents and providing an opportunity for the parents to ask questions.

Based on the data from the administrators in this study, differences in perceptions of the effectiveness of the Head Start program on parental involvement in the participating town was evident. While the Head Start Coordinator contends that the program takes many steps to involve parents in their program, the school administrators do not feel that the Head Start program influences parental involvement. When asked how Head Start influences a parent's confidence, a school administrator stated that she saw no evidence that supported that Head Start influenced confidence in parents. Additionally, while the Head Start coordinator had a detailed list of available Head Start services to enhance and even promote involvement efforts of the parents, both the early childhood principal and the elementary principal stated that they did not feel that the Head Start program influenced parental involvement. Differing views also existed between parent participants concerning the influence of Head Start of parent

involvement. While some parents felt that their involvement in Head Start influenced their parental involvement efforts, other parents felt that their connection with the Head Start program had little to no affect on their involvement efforts. The differing opinions of the participants of this study and the administrators indicate that there is a gap in understandings of the influence of Head Start in this district for enhancing parent involvement in education.

Factors that Help or Hinder Parental Involvement

The third research question in this study was, *“What factors, since the child has entered elementary school, have either helped or hindered parent involvement?”*

Findings identified from analysis of the data are included in Table 6. These responses assisted in the development of the emerging theme: parent empowerment for involvement.

Parents indicated that several factors influenced, either positively or negatively, their involvement efforts by making them feel more /less confident or empowered to participate. These factors include past experiences, staff encouragement, school communication, parent perceptions of their role in education, and student need for independence. These findings are summarized in Table six.

Empowering Parents

Table 6
Head Start and non-Head Start Participants Responses

Factors that have helped or hindered Parent involvement	No. of interviews (out of 13)	% of 13 Interviews
Past experience	9	69%
Staff encouragement	10	77%
School communication	13	100%
Parent role	12	92%
Student independence	11	85%

Table 6 represents responses from the thirteen parents who participated in this research study. Past experience was perceived by nine of thirteen participants (69 percent) as being one factor that either helped or hindered their involvement in their child's education. Some parents who participated in this study indicated that they had great memories of their own parents participating with them in their education and they wanted the same for their children. However, other parents indicated that their parents did not participate in their education as they grew up and they wanted better for their own children. This study supported that past experience, positive or negative, was an indication of the strong influence that they had on the parental involvement efforts of parents who participated in this study.

Staff encouragement, reported by ten of thirteen parents or 77 percent of participants, and school communication, reported by thirteen of thirteen parents or 100 percent of participants, were identified as factors that influenced involvement efforts. Findings from this study indicate that teacher encouragement for involvement promoted

enhanced parent involvement. Hally (mother of one first grader and former Head Start parent) said, “Getting to work with her teachers was a big plus. Her teacher was always telling me ways that she can improve and be better.” Hope stated that she felt that the teachers encouraged her to fulfill her role as a parent. “They are great at what they do. They are a big influence. They encourage us to be involved, not just at home but up here at school, and in their lives, as much as we can be. That’s a big role there.” Heidi stated, “They (the teachers) are very, very encouraging to have the parents come to school. You just come. They highly encourage you to come and participate with your child.”

According to Wherry (2003), it is vital for administration as well as teachers to encourage respectful communication between the school and the home in order to overcome possible barriers in parental involvement. Parent responses in this study support this understanding. Heidi stated that encouragement from the school (fliers, posters, and notes coming home in backpacks) to attend school events was a factor that influenced her involvement in her child’s education. Natalie (non-Head Start mother of a seven-year old boy in second grade) stated that text messages, notes home in back packs and verbal reminders were actions taken by teachers that she appreciated and that these actions encouraged her continued involvement. Harper (mother of three boys) said that the teachers contact her (text or phone call) even when her kids do something outstanding, and she felt that this communication was an encouragement for her to stay involved. Nancy stated that she was influenced by supportive teachers that actually want parents to be involved and that encourage that continued involvement through verbal or written invitations, notes, and reminders. She went on to say that teachers and administrators are the biggest factor to encourage parent involvement in their child’s education.

Findings from this study support Whitaker & Fiore's (2001) contention that parent involvement efforts may be influenced by their own experiences in school. In this study, parents who expressed lack of support from their own parents expressed that they wanted to do a better job of involvement themselves for their own children. For example, Heidi, a Head Start parent identified by administration as not involved and a parent of one Pre-K student and one first grader, remembered how she was raised and "doesn't want them (her children) to grow up like that." Heidi also commented that she had observed many parents who were not involved and "not there for their kids." "I was raised with three brothers and both my parents worked long, crazy hours. They didn't participate with me. So, to me, I see how I was raised, and I don't want my kids to grow up like that." Harper also had parents who were not actively involved in her education while growing up, and, as a result, she has vowed to be involved in her three boys' education because of her parents' lack of involvement. Conversely, parents whose parents were highly involved were motivated by the role model set by their parents when they were young children. Natalie said, "My mom was always there for me or a part of my education. She always was pushing me to do my best and to be involved. My mom and I are best friends. So, I am kind of like my mom you would say."

Findings from this study further suggest that role construction is a factor that motivates parent involvement in education. Parent perceptions of their role in education was mentioned by twelve of thirteen parents (92 percent of participants) as a factor that helped or hindered their involvement in their child's education. For example, Hazel and Henry (Hispanic couple that interviewed together) stated, "It's just our role as parents that influenced us to know what to do with my child." Hazel and Henry went on to say that they wanted to be involved in their kids' lives and "if they (their children) see us (the

parents) with them participating, they will want to do the same for their children one day.” Hank responded to questions about involvement by saying “that’s just being a parent” and Nancy stated that “having older children and having gone through the process of school three times (meaning that they had had two children prior go through the Head Start program and the elementary school program), influenced me to know what to do this time through.”

Conversely, student independence was reported by eleven of thirteen parents (85 percent of participants) as a factor that negatively influenced their involvement efforts. Findings from this study suggest that student expectations/preferences for involvement influence the involvement of these parents. Many of the participants in this study noted that as their children get older, their children develop independence and may not need the parents to help them as much. Hazel and Henry (Hispanic couple) noted that when their children get to the middle school “they (the students) don’t really need you.” This couple feels that the schools progressively “treat them (the students) older.” So, according to this family, as the students leave the early childhood building, the expectations of the students are different. As the students get older and leave the early childhood building, fewer fun days, such as “Muffins with Moms” and “Donuts with Dads,” are observed at the elementary and middle school buildings. “The older the kids get, the less they (the schools) do (to reach out to parents).” Another parent stated, “They (the students) don’t care for your involvement unless you go to their sporting events.” Other participants in this study noted that eventually their children get comfortable with the school and say, “Mom, you can go home now.” Haven noted that the development of social skills and an environment for learning causes children to become more independent. Her child (a past Head Start student) is currently in first grade; she stated, “He is just more independent

and doesn't really need me." When asked what changes she has experienced once her child left Head Start, Haven stated that, although she still reminds her child to study and do homework, she is needed less in the initiation of homework once he gets home. "He is just much more independent and ready to do it on his own." Haven feels that his confidence is greater and that, with increased confidence, came a greater independence. She explained, "I'm not as needed."

Triangulation of Data. Findings for Research Question 3 were supported through interviews conducted with the administrators. All three of the administrators in this study (early childhood Principal, 3-5th grade Principal and Head Start Coordinator of parental involvement activities) provided their perceptions of factors that have either helped or hindered parental involvement their school.

Concerning administrator perceptions about factors that motivate parents for involvement, administrators interviewed for this study stated that their schools encouraged parents to volunteer throughout the school year. One administrator explained that encouraging parent volunteers allows parents to experience the invitation as well as to feel that the administration welcomes involvement of parents. Furthermore, special days, specifically designed for certain groups (parents, grandparents and relatives), are used to involve families and provide them with opportunities to participate in school activities and ultimately promotes parental involvement within their school programs. For instance, there are "Muffins with Moms," or "Donuts with Dads," or "Lunch with Grandparents" days. Although the administration and the teachers encourage families to come up and volunteer throughout the year, one administrator explained, "They don't have to have an invitation to do something in the school." The administration encourages birthday parties and has special fun days throughout the school year that parents can

attend. For instance, the early childhood Principal reports that the Halloween costume parade is a special event that draws many parents/families to the school. She stated that the event is so well attended that, "There is no parking on this side of town that day." Other "fun days" for parents include a track and field day for the early childhood building and special breakfast or lunch days. An administrator explained, "We have the round tables where they (all our guests) can come for breakfast or for lunch and they can sit out around the table with their children." The early childhood principal is well known for being out in front of the building each day at student drop off and at student pick up time after school. It was noted that parents appreciated this practice. Each of the parents stated how "wonderful it was" to see (the administrator) each day "greeting our children and giving them a hi-five." The principal stated that being out front "makes them (parents) all feel welcome." She also stated that her head secretary in the building is an asset to the school and "greeted each of her parents in a great way."

The early childhood building (Pre-K-2nd grade) was busy with activities that involved parents and families each day that I was there. I was fortunate to witness first hand the large number of volunteers the school has. The Book Fair, "Breakfast with Grandparents," "Donuts with Dad," and "Muffins with Mom" are just a few activities that the early childhood building hosts each year. Volunteers were seen throughout the building making copies, running errands and "filling in" for teachers who were absent. The head secretary was busy at work, greeting families, and taking phone calls with a warm tone that exuded a welcoming environment. Additionally, the early childhood Principal had the same sense of openness. The building was very welcoming.

The elementary Principal (3-5th grade) stated that her building was "pretty much an open-door policy." She stated that, at enrollment time each year, there is a place on

enrollment forms where parents can volunteer. “It’s a good list of about fourteen things that the parents can check.” The Principal noted that this form provided an opportunity for parents to volunteer for what they wanted to do throughout the school year. The items on the list included homeroom mother, tutor, and volunteer for parties. “A lot of parents write the word ‘EVERYTHING’ across the top of the paper, and the teachers keep that list all year. When we need someone, we just go to that list and call them.” The elementary Principal also noted that they have parent nights where the school has meetings during which they tell the parents about events and activities in their child’s grade level.

Research shows a decline in parental involvement as the student transitions from elementary to middle school (Brough & Irvin, 2001; Epstein, 1995; Halsey, 2004; Wright & Willis; 2004). Epstein and Dauber (1991) also found parental involvement in elementary schools was considerably greater than parental involvement in middle school. Campo (2011) specifically noted types of involvement that decreased including such things as volunteering in the classrooms, communicating with the student’s teacher(s), helping with homework, and participating in workshops at the school. My observations conducted at the elementary building supported these findings of somewhat less participation in everyday activities in the older elementary. However, administrators indicated that special events and party days were days that promoted volunteers to be involved in their students’ school activities.

The Head Start Coordinator indicated that the Head Start program, like the elementary building, had a survey for the parents to fill out at the time of enrollment. She explained,

They fill out the parent survey, and that allows us to know what they would like to be trained on, what their interests are and if they have any skills. Maybe they want to sing, or if they play the guitar, if they have animals, they can bring them up to share with the children. That survey helps us plug the parents in where they are needed and what they can do and what their skills are.

The Head Start Coordinator stated that their biggest challenge right now with getting parents involved in their child's education was that both parents work. "It used to be that you know, the moms stayed at home with the children and they had the opportunity to come up and volunteer. So now, that's our biggest challenge is to make connections with all parents."

Comparison of Head Start and Non-Head Start Parent Involvement

Similar responses were seen between Head Start and non-Head Start parents when asked interview questions. When asked, *How do you perceive your role to be in your child's education*, Head Start and non-Head Start parents both indicated that they push their children, volunteer, attend parent/teacher conferences, and assist their children with homework. Both sets of parents indicated that it was their role as a parent to help their children with school, encourage their children and over see their progress. However, non-Head Start parents stated that they shared in the 'educator' role. Nichole, "My role is not the primary educator and yet it is. It's my job to set an example. Everything starts at home." Nancy said, "It starts at home. My role is as important as any teacher will ever have. My job is to continue what they have taught at school."

So, while Head Start and non-Head Start parents share in the notion that they should encourage their children, push them, and volunteer to help at school, non Head Start parents appear to believe that "everything starts at home." It was my interpretation

that the non-Head Start parents believe that they are their child's first educator. Nichole (non-Head Start) stated, "I think my role in a lot of ways is maybe not the primary educator and yet in a lot of ways it is. Because, EVERYTHING starts at home." Self efficacy appeared to be strong in non-Head Start parents beliefs of their role in their child's education.

Current Involvement Efforts. When asked, *How are you currently involved?*, Head Start and non-Head Start parents had the following responses. Both Head Start and non-Head start parents indicated that they helped their children with homework. Twelve of the thirteen parents indicated they helped their children with homework (one involved non-Head Start parent did not indicate that he/she helped with homework). Ten of the thirteen parents indicated that they volunteered (one involved Head Start parent, one not involved Head Start parent and one involved non-Head Start parent did not indicate that they volunteered), and all thirteen parents indicated that they took part in some sort of the school/classroom events. For example, all the parents who participated in the study (both Head Start and non-Head Start parents) indicated that they attended class parties, special school events (Muffins with Mom, Donuts with Dad, Grandparents Day) or other special events that they were invited to attend by the classroom teachers and/or school administration. However, the non-Head Start parents indicated that they signed up to attend field trips, special project days, substituted, teacher appreciation lunches, volunteered in the music department and extra-curricular and community related activities such as (4-H, Sunday School, Bible School). Non-Head Start parents also listed other such activities as piano lessons, swimming, play, community coalition, and games.

So, both Head Start and non-Head Start parents reported the stereotypical events often identified by schools/families as parental involvement activities. These activities

are the classic involvement activities listed on surveys as well as on fliers and newsletters home to parents. However, the non-Head Start parents also reported extracurricular activities as well as family activities that are not often considered school activities. Many of these non-traditional activities represent community activities and do not involve the schools directly.

Factors Influencing Parent Role Construction. When asked, *What factors have influenced your perception of your role in your child's education*, Head Start and non-Head Start parents had similar responses. For Head Start parents, three out of the eight said that their own parents influenced their involvement. (One participant had a parent who was actively involved in his/her education while growing up and two participants did not have parents that were involved and they wanted better for their children). However, three of the four non-Head Start parents indicated that they had parents who were actively involved in their education as well and they had learned from that experience. Looking at all thirteen participants in this study, nine parents said that some form of past-experience influenced their decision to be involved in their child's education today. For example, some participants indicated that their own parents being active in their educations as they were growing up influence their perception of their role. However, those parents that indicated that their parents were not involved indicated that it influenced them on what their role should be in their child's education. They wanted better for their children than what they had themselves growing up. Past "life experiences" such as job changes, or family medical conditions, and past experiences of raising older children were mentioned by both Head Start and non-Head Start parents as influential in them knowing their role as a parent. All thirteen parents (Head Start and non-Head Start parents) indicated that school communication was an influence on their

involvement in their child's education. Furthermore, one Head Start parent (identified as 'not involved') indicated that good teachers and good principals was what influenced their involvement as parents.

Additionally, communication as well as the feeling of being welcome within the school was a common influence on the participants (both Head Start and non-Head Start) perception of their role in their child's education. However, while the early childhood programs (Head Start and Pre-K-2nd grade) were commended on the communication efforts used to keep parents informed of upcoming events, the elementary school program (3rd -5th grade) were noted as having fewer modes of communication and fewer daily reminders to keep parents informed of what was going on at the school.

While there were many similarities among Head Start and non-Head Start parents on the factors that had influenced their perception of their role in their child's education, it was a non-Head Start parent that stated very directly, "Teachers and administrators are the biggest factor on if parents are involved." The Head Start parents indicated that they wanted to feel welcome, but they never did state that the key to this was the teachers and administrators. Furthermore, while the non-Head Start parent stated that a parent's involvement efforts were influenced by teachers and administrators, other non-Head Start parents indicated that as parents they needed to communicate with the teachers to find that appropriate time and activity to participate in. Non-Head Start parents indicated that as the environments of the school change, so do the expectations of involvement and that communication was very important. Head Start parents spoke of the influence of communication on involvement efforts and yet, never gave any specific information on how communication efforts did anything more than inform them (schools informing parents) of the activities that were coming up.

Trustworthiness of Findings

Triangulation of Data

Triangulation was used to ensure the validity of the data. According to Maxwell (2005) triangulation is “collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings” (p. 112). This study utilized multiple parents, and school leaders from three different schools within one school district.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend that credibility is the most important quality of the trustworthiness of a study. Credibility was achieved in this study by using the following techniques: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and purposeful sampling. Relationships were established through a prolonged engagement that involved email, interviews, phone calls, and additional informal visits to the school. Relationships were further developed through purposeful sampling. Observations as well as collection of artifacts were used to assist in the triangulation of data needed to support findings for this study. Transferability was achieved throughout this study with the use of rich, thick descriptions of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend that thick descriptions are an essential element to the judgements of transferability, allowing this study to transfer to another setting. Detailed notes and transcriptions from audio recorded interviews, observations, and artifacts allow for needed documentation for possible later use.

Table 7
Trustworthiness Table
Technique

Technique	Results	Examples
Prolonged Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust Built • Rapport developed • Relationship built 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to interviewees by program administrator • Emails/phone calls to interviewees prior to interviews
Persistent Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtained in-depth data • Sorted relevant from irrelevant information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of interviewees during the interviews • Writing interview reflections • Conducting observations of school surrounding and daily activities
Triangulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing observation reflections • Multiple sources of data: interviews, observations, reflections, artifacts
Referential Adequacy Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple participants • Artifacts: pictures, fliers, notes, handbook, calendar, announcements, newspapers, signs
Member Checking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of data and interpretations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal discussion with colleagues • Audio taped interview, discussions
Thick Descriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transferability judgement obtained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficiently detailed descriptions of data collections
Purposeful Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive emergent themes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich detail obtained

Limitations of Study

As with all qualitative research, findings of the study cannot be generalized to schools with differing demographics or characteristics (Yin, 2003). Rather, this study was intended to explore the influences of an early childhood program, Head Start, on parental involvement efforts of past Head Start parents within one school district. Therefore, this study captures parent and administrator perceptions in this district based upon this district's unique characteristics and context. Participation in this study was voluntary. It can be assumed that it is likely that only involved parents participated in this study. Therefore, this study likely does not represent the voices of uninvolved parents. Additionally, the term "parent involvement" is understood in a variety of ways. Therefore, asking administrators to identify parents as "involved" or "not involved" is dependent upon the administrator's perception of parent involvement. While this factor served as a limitation, it also provided additional insight into the findings of the study. All parents in this study considered themselves to be "involved" in their child's education. Therefore, it is likely that administrators did not recognize the involvement efforts that some parents were making.

Summary

This chapter includes findings from data analysis and alignment of findings with each research question. Chapter 4 entailed a summary of the population and sample, data collection methods, and participant recruitment. A variety of data sources were utilized

including parent and administrator interviews, observation, and document analysis. Data analysis and findings were included in chapter 4.

Three qualitative research questions guided this study. The first research question examined how parents whose children were formerly involved in Head Start described their involvement efforts in their child's education. The second research question examined how involvement in Head Start influences a parents' choice for involvement. Research question three investigated what factors, during the child's progress in elementary school, have either helped or hindered parent involvement. Thirteen parent participants and three school administrators were interviewed using semi-structured protocol.

From the data analysis, three themes emerged. These themes were 1) parenting aspiration and expectation, 2) leadership, and 3) empowering parents. A review of the thirteen parent interviews was provided. Interpretation of findings, discussion, limitations of the study, recommendations for future studies, and concluding remarks will be presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain an understanding of the influence of participation in an early childhood program, Head Start, on parent involvement during the elementary school years. Additionally, this study sought to understand contextual factors that influence parental involvement. Participants included nine Head Start parents and four non-Head Start parents whose children have progressed into early elementary school. Also, included in the study was one administrator from each of the elementary schools (Pre-k- 2nd, and 3-5th) as well as the coordinator from the Head Start program, for a total of 16 interviews.

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings of this study. From the analysis of data, three themes emerged: 1) parenting aspiration and expectation as the primary means of involvement, 2) leadership influence on parent involvement, and 3) parent perceptions of empowerment. Because Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) theory of parental involvement outlines parent motivation to become involved in the educational development of a child, this theory is used as the theoretical framework in this study. This framework provides an understanding of parent psychological factors that motivate parents to become involved. This framework identifies three key factors that influence a parents' choice for involvement: parent role construction, parent efficacy and parent perceptions of invitation for involvement. Each of the three emergent themes

of this study will be discussed utilizing the key factors of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theory.

Findings

Parental Aspiration and Expectation

The first theme that emerged from analysis of data was that parents expressed that "aspiration and expectation" was the most salient form of parent involvement for parents in this study. This section explains this finding of aspiration and expectation that emerged from the data of this research study.

Parents in this study, both Head Start parents and non-Head Start parents, indicated that the most important form of involvement, for them, was setting high expectations for student achievement and communicating those expectations/aspirations to their children. The expression "aspiration" was used to represent the parent's ultimate goals for being involved in their child's education while the term "expectation" was used to represent responses used by the participants of this study to represent various actions/activities that they are involved in and that the parents appear to find readily attainable. Participants used various words (over-see, encourage, push) to describe their involvement efforts. These words represent actions that parents used to describe their efforts to participate in their child's education. Other words used by parents were "encourager," and "first teacher." Again, these words indicate the parent's understanding of the importance of setting high expectations for their children to encourage educational success.

This finding, setting high expectations, is strongly supported in the literature as an important form of parent involvement. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997), parents' understandings or perceptions of their role in education directly

influence involvement efforts. The finding that parents perceived their role to be “cheerleader” or “encourager” addresses one of the most salient forms of parent involvement identified in the literature (Jeynes, 2010). According to Jeynes, setting high expectations is one of the most influential forms of parent involvement for promoting student success (Jeynes, 2010). A meta-analysis, conducted by Jeynes (2005), indicated that, although checking homework and other family disciplines had a positive effect on parental involvement, other types of involvement that may not be quite as visible to schools, such as setting high expectations for achievement and advancement, were more influential in promoting student success than the more visible forms of involvement such as attendance at school events. In this research study, Head Start participants’ responses included to encourage, push, and over-see children.

Many of the parents involved in this study also participated in events that are typically interpreted by school officials as parent involvement. These events included parental support in helping their child with homework and volunteering at their child’s school. Additional opportunities for parents to visibly demonstrate their involvement included parent’s attendance at school events such as school parties, parent teacher conferences, field trips, and assorted classroom activities. However, parent interpretation of their involvement in these recognizable forms of parent involvement differed from administrator interpretations. These events were not perceived by parents to be “an end in themselves.” In contrast, by attending these events, parents felt that they were supporting and encouraging their children and that their involvement in these activities communicated their aspirations and expectations to the children. This dedication by parents indicated parent understanding that having high expectations for their children included setting an example for them by participating in school events. Specifically,

setting an example included being at school events so that one day these children would also become involved in their own children's education. This aspiration was a priority of numerous parents in this study.

The discrepancy between parent perceptions and school perceptions is an important finding because setting high expectations for their children may not be recognized by schools as parental involvement. This almost "invisible" form of encouragement, although very influential, may be difficult for schools to identify and acknowledge as involvement (Jeynes, 2010). This understanding may help to explain the discrepancy found in this study between parent perceptions of their involvement and school perceptions. Specifically, the parent participants in this study identified by school leaders as "not involved" indicated that they perceive themselves to be very involved. Because setting high expectations for student achievement is not a visible form of involvement, involvement of these parents may have been misunderstood or unrecognized by school leaders.

This finding deserves additional consideration. Findings in the literature suggest that schools often misinterpret parent actions/activities and that schools and parents often have differing perceptions of involvement efforts (Epstein, 1995; Nieto, 2004). A possible explanation for the misunderstanding between administrators and parents in this study could potentially be that other life demands, such as work schedules or the need to care for other children in the home, could possibly minimize parent ability to attend events during school hours and that parents, instead, focus their attention on actions or attitudes that they can promote at home. Hoover-Dempsey, et al. (2005) support this contention. In their revised framework, Hoover-Dempsey, et al., (2005) included the factor of "life context variables" that influence parent involvement efforts. According to

Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2005), variables such as work schedules and other life demands can often influence parent ability to be involved in typically school recognized events. This finding suggests that if schools continue to define “parent involvement” according to parent participation in school designed activities set on the school’s schedule (Curry & Holter, 2015), schools may actually overlook or misinterpret the involvement efforts of parents. Additional study is warranted to determine whether life context variables did, indeed, limit parent ability to participate in school events.

Because Head Start emphasizes setting high expectations for children, and because Head Start parents in this study expressed an appreciation for learning to set high expectations through Head Start, findings from this study suggest that participation in Head Start may have, indeed, influenced parent role construction. Head Start parents expressed appreciation for the influence that Head Start had on their expectations. However, the fact that both non-Head Start and Head Start parents expressed setting high expectations as their primary means of involvement leaves room for alternative interpretations. For example, while it is possible that the Head Start program truly influenced parents’ perceptions of involvement, the fact that non-Head Start parents indicated that they are primarily involved by setting high expectations for their children indicates that additional factors may influence role construction. Other factors identified in the literature include parent instinct (Cronin, 2013; Gordon, 2002) and a parents’ past experiences (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Jackson, 2010). Parent instinct and past experiences were identified by both non-Head Start and Head Start parents in this study as factors that influenced their involvement efforts and will be further discussed in themes two and three of this study. Parent interaction with other parents, falling under the category of school communication in theme three, was also identified by both Head

Start and non-Head Start parents in this study as influential in their involvement efforts. For example, research participants indicated that the monthly Head Start parent meeting enabled parents to interact and socialize with each other. This interaction was influential for some parents in such ways as meeting new parents and watching other parents. The meetings also influenced parents by helping them understand ways to be involved in their child's education, and these meetings served as a means of encouragement for parents to get out, to get involved, and to meet other parents each month.

As Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model (1997) of parental involvement suggests, "Specific variables create patterns of influence at critical points in the parental involvement process" (p. 3). The results of this study suggest that these Head Start parents received the support and guidance needed to develop their role as parents in their child's initial stages of academic development. Furthermore, these parents exhibited self-efficacy for helping their child succeed in school through their acknowledgement of aspirations and expectations. However, what is not known is precisely why administrators in this study perceived at least four parent participants to be detached from involvement efforts. Further study is needed to gain a better understanding of discrepancies between parent perspectives and school perspectives concerning involvement efforts.

The Influence of Leadership on Parent Involvement

The study's second theme, leadership influence on parental involvement, established that actions and attitudes of school personnel influenced parent perceptions of involvement. To the past Head Start parents, the importance of their attendance and/or participation in their child's educational activities evolved from their involvement in the program and through encouragement from Head Start teachers and leaders. In this research study, participants specifically indicated that involvement in Head Start influenced parents to be "more of a part of their children's lives." Other parents explained the influence of Head Start personnel on involvement efforts in their comments, "I think I am a whole lot more involved," and "It made me more aware of what we have as a family" because of the influence of Head Start personnel. Findings from this research study indicated that the parents' awareness of the importance of their involvement was made clearer through their participation in the Head Start program. Additionally, participants credited their awareness of the importance of their involvement to "encouragement" from various stakeholders/leaders. Parents indicated that their connections with the program, including Head Start teachers as well as the Head Start coordinator, introduced and reinforced efforts by encouraging participation in the areas of nutrition, social services, mental health services and health services. Parents received encouragement and training in each of these areas to build knowledge as well as skills that would assist in the overall development of their child. This encouragement from Head Start leaders inspired feelings of validation in parents.

According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997), parent efficacy for involvement is a key psychological factor in promoting involvement decisions. Findings from this study indicate that validation of their role in their child's education gave parents

the confidence to continue their efforts as their children progressed through school. For example, although their children have since moved from the Head Start program into the early childhood building and beyond, parents indicated that their efforts of involvement continue to manifest in their child's school activities throughout the school year. This finding is important because it indicates that parent role construction and efficacy, supported through the Head Start program, continued well beyond Head Start involvement and into the early elementary years. This finding suggests that this early childhood program (Head Start) may have influenced parent involvement, through the development of role construction and efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997) that continues as the child progresses through elementary school. Additional research is needed to examine the involvement of non-Head Start parents as a child progresses in elementary school to determine if differences exist between Head Start and non-Head Start parents across years. This understanding is beyond the scope of this current study.

Concerning factors that influenced parent involvement after children entered elementary school, parents (Head Start and non-Head Start) indicated that school leaders' actions were instrumental in continuation of their involvement efforts. For example, parents reflected upon the welcoming environment that they had experienced during earlier grades. They referred to notes home, text messages, phone reminders, posters, communication logs, conferences, and other modes of ongoing communication efforts made by the early childhood programs to inform and involve parents in the every day school activities. Specific comments from parents included, "oh, just the openness of the staff and teachers," "communication is never an issue," and "welcome always to chat." Epstein and Dauber (1991) suggested that parents are most involved when teachers actively encourage parent involvement. The Head Start coordinator as well as the early

childhood principal were actively pursuing parents to become involved in their child's education.

According to Epstein (2001), one of the strongest influences for parental involvement within a school district can be determined through the school leaders as well as teachers' practices within the school. School leaders who continued to encourage parent involvement reinforced parent's actions to continue their involvement.

Additionally, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) model of psychological factors that influence parent involvement indicates that invitations for involvement can be very motivating factors for parents. Past Head Start parents participating in this study found support in the teachers' encouragement that they received in their child's school. Parents indicated that both the Head Start coordinator and the Early Childhood principal encouraged participation of parents through extending a feeling of invitation as described by the participants of this study. These parents (past Head Start parents) identified methods used by both school leaders that made them feel as if they belonged and were needed in the educational process of their children. For example, parents indicated that these leaders encouraged participation in everyday activities as well as in special events sponsored by the school. Furthermore, parents were encouraged by various modes of communication to engage in activities at home with their children such as homework, reading, and checking backpacks for communication from the school. Invitations for involvement from school leaders encouraged their efforts to remain involved even beyond participation in the Head Start program.

Leadership Influence in Older Elementary Grades

While the Head Start coordinator and Early Childhood principal encouraged involvement through various modes of communication and welcoming invitations to

attend special days and parties at school, methods used by school leaders at the Elementary School (3-5th grade) were much different. During interviews, parents noted the existence of fewer daily reminders and modes of communication that encouraged parents to become involved. It appeared that the main form of invitation used with parents in these older grades was a survey presented at enrollment time. This survey allowed parents to select items or activities that they would like to participate in for the year from a defined list that had been developed by the school. Many parents mentioned that if they signed up to help with a party or activity by bringing a donated item, often they were told that they could send the item to school with their child. Fewer encouragements (noted by participants of this study) were used to initiate parent ongoing participation in their child's educational process.

Additional factors could also explain less evidence of parent involvement efforts by both parents and school leaders at the Elementary School level (3-5th). Such factors as child maturity, less time for parties and special days due to rigorous curriculum, and a misunderstanding by school leaders of the parents' desire/abilities to become involved may have been influential on the parental involvement issues within the Elementary School. A break down in communication was noticeably disappointing to the parents who participated in this study.

Lessened involvement at the older elementary levels could also be explained through Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's framework (see Walker et al., 2005). Walker et al. (2005) contended that elements of life contexts (knowledge, skills, time, and energy) function as a motivator of a parents' decisions about involvement. Such life context variables influence a parents' choices of involvement related to their child's education (2005). For example, when children get older, some parents may choose to return to

work. Taxing work schedules, then, may influence parent ability to be involved. Additionally, younger siblings that have been born in families may also demand a parent's time and attention. This demand may, in turn, diminish parent ability to be involved. Additionally, these life contexts may, in turn, influence a parents' role construction and efficacy. For example, as children proceed in grade level, assignments and expectations become more rigorous. Parent efficacy may fluctuate as technology or concepts are introduced that parents are not familiar with. Also, such life contexts may influence the teachers' and leaders' perceptions of a parents' ability to be involved. Assumptions may be made by school leaders that impact their perception of the need to provide families a genuine invitation or feeling of being "welcome" for involvement.

While some parents noticed the maturity in their children and possibly anticipated/rationalized a decrease in needed parent participation, other parents were disappointed or confused by what seemed to be an abrupt change in the school's communication concerning their role as parents. Feelings noted by research participants ranged from acceptance to slight disappointment and to feelings of rejection by school leaders. Communication from school staff and administration in dealing with this change was indicated by some participants, while other parents felt abandoned and left wondering what their current role was as a parent. Examples of parent's feelings about the status of parental involvement as their children enter the Elementary School (3-5th grades) included such thoughts that teacher's actions were communicating, "I'm closing my door because now is MY time to have your child," or "They [teachers] send a note home to let you know what to send to school and they say, just send it with your child." One of the same parents who noted that her child's teacher had her send party favors to school with her child, indicated that the early childhood building (Pre-K-2nd grade)

“would make us feel more important and they [school leaders] would embrace you [parents].”

When the study participants’ children were enrolled in Head Start and preschool, the teachers’ as well as the schools’ expectations required parental involvement to assist in teaching parents what their role was in their child’s education. However, according to the interviews of this study, as the student moved from one grade to the next, the child’s abilities began to grow, the child became independent, and parents appeared to be needed less. So, in turn, throughout the child’s progression in school and growth in independence, parents’ self-efficacy and role construction also changed. Consequently, the parents’ role became somewhat confusing to those involved. As the parent’s perceptions of their roles began to change, they often were not informed by stakeholders on how they were to manage these feelings or what their new roles were in their child’s education. This confusion led to feelings of diminished self-efficacy and role construction.

According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (1995, 1997) model of parent involvement, lack of invitations from school leaders could negatively influence parent involvement efforts, and lessened involvement may continue throughout a child’s school years. These elementary leaders expressed the importance of their students taking responsibility and growing in independence. However, even though schools have a sincere interest in promoting student independence, if efforts to encourage independence communicate to parents that they are no longer needed, these efforts may result in unintended consequences. For example, according to Jeynes (2010), setting high expectations for academic achievement was one of the most salient forms of parent involvement for student success. However, if schools communicate to parents that they

are not important in the educational process, parents may discontinue communicating high expectations and attending events to support their children. School leaders must keep in mind the importance of partnership efforts that last even beyond early grades (Campbell, 2003; Epstein, 1995; Gumeseli & Eryilmza, 2011). Behaving in ways that communicate a welcoming environment to parents can promote academic success and help schools and parents encourage students to reach educational goals.

Empowering Parents

The phrase “empowering parents” represents the intent of early childhood programs to promote collaboration based on a family centered approach. These programs emphasize empowering the parents to participate in all areas of family life (Bruckman & Blanton, 2003). The value of empowering parents for involvement is supported in the literature (Coleman & Wallinga, 2000; Lawson, 2003). Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2005) report, “parents who consistently characterized their children’s schools as empowering and welcoming reported more involvement than did those in other schools” (p. 110-111). Furthermore, according to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005), best school and leadership practices include principal leadership that involves creating a school climate that is positive and that empowers parents for involvement in their children’s education, Schools that have leaders that encourage staff and promote parental involvement, enhance a school climate, offer an inviting school and in turn, empower parents to become actively involved in their child’s education (2005).

The early childhood programs (Head Start and Early Childhood) in this study empowered parents to take the initiative to be involved in many aspects of their child’s education. Stakeholders (school leaders/teachers) invested trust in parents and encouraged them to engage in their child’s education. This engagement boosted parent

efficacy and promoted further incidents for parental involvement. When parents are empowered, they may attempt tasks (such as helping with homework) that initially may have seemed challenging to them. The school leaders and teachers in the Head Start program and in the early childhood program promoted feelings of trust and empowerment to encourage parents to continue participation within the district. Additionally, parent empowerment increased as parents learned new ways to help their children and to be involved in their child's education. For example, parents indicated that getting to work with teachers and administrators gave them the opportunity to see first hand how to work with their child in educational situations. The teachers as well as administrators assisted parents in knowing how to go over homework, how to get involved in school by encouraging them to attend school events, and by being in constant contact with the families on upcoming events and activities at school.

Parent perceptions of empowerment at the older elementary program, however, greatly varied. The elementary program (grades 3-5) presented a school climate that encouraged participation in "predictable" events outlined on a survey provided to parents at enrollment each year. Such a climate did not focus on meeting parent needs; instead, it focused on meeting school needs through parent involvement. In turn, parents experienced confusion in what the elementary leaders' expectations were for involvement in their child's transition from the early childhood programs (Head Start and Early Childhood) to the elementary building (grades 3-5). As a result, parents appeared to experience issues of regression with self-efficacy and role construction. Furthermore, parents began to question the school invitation that they had been so proud of in previous years through the early childhood programs (Head Start and Early Childhood). They also

began to question their capacity to partner with the school in the education of their children.

This finding is also consistent with other findings in the literature that parent involvement diminishes as children go from elementary to middle school and then to high school (Jeynes, 2007). What this study adds to this understanding is that schools actually influence parent perceptions about the need for parent involvement as students get older and progress in grade level. Findings from this study suggest that schools may not intentionally communicate to parents that they are no longer needed; however, their actions may have this very effect on parents. As a result, parents are left confused about their roles in education, and their efficacy suffers also.

Conclusions

Parents in this study indicated a sincere need to receive encouragement, invitation, and communication from school leaders to feel empowered in terms of participating in their child's education. Influences associated with feelings of involvement and commitment for parents to participate in their child's education were stronger when associated with the Head Start and the early childhood programs. Evidence of encouragement, invitation, and overall feelings of being welcome were apparent in these programs. Role construction was strong among parents whose children had been enrolled in the Head Start or Early Childhood programs. Communication efforts and relationships were also well established among stakeholders (parents, teachers and administration) within these programs (Head Start and Early Childhood programs). This strong influence of involvement at the early childhood level appeared to set a standard for participation in parents and created a needed/expected validation from school leaders for parents to get involved once their child moved to the elementary level

(3-5th grade). Participants of this study indicated that the “welcome” or invitation that these parents were accustomed to at the early childhood level was not the same at the Elementary School level and often, from their perception, non-existent.

Implications for Practice

School leaders are one of the primary influence on parental involvement efforts within their school districts (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein, 2001). While it is common for differences in definition of parental involvement to exist between one school district and another, coming to a mutual understanding among stakeholders within the same school district on what constitutes parental involvement would benefit both parents and schools. A breakdown in meaning occurred between the early childhood programs (Head Start and Early Childhood building) which led to a state of confusion in role construction and self-efficacy among parents. A change in expectations at the older Elementary School made parents question their role as parents and caused them to question whether or not their participation was needed or wanted at their child’s school.

Rapport between school leaders was evident in this study, as was professionalism that permeated teacher and leader actions on a day-to-day basis. This rapport suggests that coming to a common understanding concerning what constitutes parental involvement within the district could be achieved. Also, findings from this study suggest that building leaders and teachers must work across buildings and classrooms to assure that all parents stay involved. Parental involvement efforts that begin in the early childhood programs could, potentially, provide benefits to students throughout the child’s education.

Implications for Research

The findings of this study underscore the importance of a school's actions toward parents that communicate the importance of parental involvement beyond the early elementary years. Actions as well as the attitudes portrayed by school leaders and teachers in this study influenced parent perceptions of their role in their child's education. Parents became confused when school actions communicated that they were no longer needed at the school. In turn, this feeling was perpetuated when parents began to question their ability, or their capacity, to be involved. This questioning by parents indicates that parent efficacy is influenced when school efforts for involvement are directed primarily toward meeting school needs rather than approaching parents as true partners in the educational process. This study provides further insight to parent perceptions when school actions, although unintentional, communicate to parents that parent involvement is not essential for student success. When parents are relegated to providing favors for school parties or to fill seats in school events, parent role construction and efficacy are influenced in a way that actually diminishes parent motivation for involvement.

This study provided an overview of the perceptions of the early childhood leader, the elementary school leader, and the parent's perceptions of the parental involvement efforts at their schools. Further research is needed to provide additional understandings concerning parent perceptions about leader actions and attitudes that can promote and maintain involvement beyond the early childhood and elementary years. A similar study of the perception of parents concerning the middle school and high school at the participating school could also provide a broader view of the perception of parental involvement efforts beyond elementary school.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the influence of an early childhood program, Head Start, on parent involvement during the early elementary school years. Additionally, this study aimed to seek an understanding of factors that influence the involvement of parents, whose children have completed the Head Start program, during the early elementary school years. Findings from the study suggest that a school district's ability to encourage and promote parental involvement is ongoing. Findings also suggest that although early childhood programs may initiate a parents' knowledge of the importance of parental involvement efforts in a child's education, future leaders (elementary school leaders and beyond) have an influence on the sustainability of involvement efforts. This study indicated that the efforts of the early childhood programs (Head Start and Early Childhood) in building successful parental involvement efforts in their schools were not enough to maintain a parent's feelings of role construction, self-efficacy, and empowerment across the elementary years without additional support from the school as children progressed in grade level. Findings suggest that school leaders who focus on maintaining the work that some early childhood programs, such as Head Start, have started early in a child's educational experiences may actually promote parent involvement efforts. These efforts, in turn, could provide important benefits to students throughout their educational experiences.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theory of parental involvement presents assumptions of why parents become involved, the forms of their involvement, and how their involvement influences students' (1995, 1997). The findings of this research study support Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theory and advances research on factors that influence sustained parental involvement efforts. The study gave detail of the influences

of the school administration as well as the school leadership on parent role construction through encouragement of parents to become involved at the early childhood level. Further research data was utilized to support a parents' feeling of empowerment established through the early childhood program (Head Start and early childhood program) by promoting collaboration through a family centered approach to involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler report that schools who consistently empower and welcome parents are reported as having more involvement than other schools (1995, 1997). Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) report that best schools and leadership practices include principal leadership that involves creating a school climate that is positive and that empower parents to be involved in their child's education. Furthermore, this study contends that parent aspiration and expectation is the most important involvement for student achievement and communicating those aspirations and expectations to their children is held at high regards by study participants. The findings of this study support Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theory of parent involvement and the need for encouragement for involvement that is extended to all parents. This study proved that the initial invitation of involvement during the early childhood years is not enough to maintain involvement efforts throughout a child's education. This study contends that sustained involvement by parents would be better maintained through ongoing efforts of school leaders to encourage parental involvement, to empower parents' feelings of role construction as well as self-efficacy, and to offer continued invitations of involvement.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Permission From [REDACTED] Public School

IRB Research

2/10/16, 10:22 PM

🔄 Reply all | ▾ 🗑 Delete Junk | ▾ ...

✕

IRB Research

[REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@[REDACTED].net>

🔄 Reply all | ▾

To: ☐ Croft, Stacey, ▾

Mon 1/11/2016 8:46 PM

Inbox

To Whom it May Concern,

Stacey Croft has the permission of [REDACTED] Public Schools to conduct research for her project.

[REDACTED]
Superintendent
[REDACTED] Public Schools

Appendix B

Recruitment Letter for Head Start Parents

Dear Parent,

My name is Stacey Croft. I am currently doing research for my dissertation study at Oklahoma State University in the field of Educational Leadership. I am seeking information from parents whose children have participated in the Head Start Program about parental involvement in education.

As a parent of a former Head Start student, you have been selected as a potential participant for my study. The intent of my study is to explore the meaning of parental involvement from a Head Start parents' perspective. The study will include one interview that will require approximately one hour of your time. You will be interviewed about your perceptions and experiences with parental involvement. The district provided me with a list of parents of a former Head Start student. I have randomly selected names from the list given to me, and I am asking you to be part of this study. No one from the school knows exactly which parents I have selected, so the school will not know whether you chose to participate or not.

Your participation involves one interview that will last about 45 minutes. During the interview, I will ask you questions about your involvement with your child's education and your experiences with Head Start. As a participant, you have the right to answer or not answer any questions that I ask. Also, you may cease participation at any time without penalty. All of your answers will remain confidential, and only aggregated results will be reported in any written documents. This means that no one, other than myself and my advisor at OSU, will have access to your responses. Interviews will be recorded simply to help me remember what was said during interviews. The identity of parents will be kept confidential by keeping answers confidential on recorded transcripts. Participants will be assigned a number at the beginning of the interviews, and interviews will be recorded using parent numbers rather than parent names. Any specific information regarding the school, region, or other people involved in this study will be de-identified during transcription.

At the time of the interview, participants will be given a copy of a consent form, which includes specific information about the research, my advisor, and the university IRB office. You will have the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and you will have the opportunity to consent or deny consent to participate at that time. If you are willing to find out more about this study and potentially participate in this study, would you please contact me either by phone or by email? I have provided contact information below. Also, if you would like additional information about the study, you are welcome to contact my advisor, Dr. Katherine Curry or the IRB Office at Oklahoma State University at irb@okstate.edu, 405-744-3377.

To Sign Up for the Study contact:

Stacey Croft: stacey.croft@okstate.edu: 580-884-8670

Questions

Stacey Croft, stacey.croft@okstate.edu, 580-884-8670

Dr. Katherine Curry, Katherine.curry@okstate.edu, 405-744-9798
Oklahoma State University

Appendix B

Recruitment Letter for Non Head Start Parents

Dear Parent,

My name is Stacey Croft. I am currently doing research for my dissertation study at Oklahoma State University in the field of Educational Leadership. I am seeking information from parents that have attended Frederick Schools about parental involvement in education.

As a parent of a student enrolled in Frederick Schools, you have been selected as a potential participant for my study. The intent of my study is to explore the meaning of parental involvement from a parents' perspective. The study will include one interview that will require approximately one hour of your time. You will be interviewed about your perceptions and experiences with parental involvement. The district provided me with a list of parents. I have randomly selected names from the list given to me, and I am asking you to be part of this study. No one from the school knows exactly which parents I have selected, so the school will not know whether you chose to participate or not.

Your participation involves one interview that will last about 45 minutes. During the interview, I will ask you questions about your involvement with your child's education. As a participant, you have the right to answer or not answer any questions that I ask. Also, you may cease participation at any time without penalty. All of your answers will remain confidential, and only aggregated results will be reported in any written documents. This means that no one, other than myself and my advisor at OSU, will have access to your responses. Interviews will be recorded simply to help me remember what was said during interviews. The identity of parents will be kept confidential by keeping answers confidential on recorded transcripts. Participants will be assigned a number at the beginning of the interviews, and interviews will be recorded using parent numbers rather than parent names. Any specific information regarding the school, region, or other people involved in this study will be de-identified during transcription.

At the time of the interview, participants will be given a copy of a consent form, which includes specific information about the research, my advisor, and the university IRB office. You will have the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and you will have the opportunity to consent or deny consent to participate at that time. If you are willing to find out more about this study and potentially participate in this study, would you please contact me either by phone or by email? I have provided contact information below. Also, if you would like additional information about the study, you are welcome to contact my advisor, Dr. Katherine Curry or the IRB Office at Oklahoma State University at irb@okstate.edu, 405-744-3377.

To Sign Up for the Study contact:

Stacey Croft: stacey.croft@okstate.edu: 580-884-8670

Questions

Stacey Croft, stacey.croft@okstate.edu, 580-884-8670

Dr. Katherine Curry, Katherine.curry@okstate.edu, 405-744-9194
Oklahoma State University

Appendix C

ADULT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

PROJECT TITLE: The Influence of an Early Childhood Program on Parental Involvement: Perceptions of Former Head Start Parents

INVESTIGATORS: Stacey Croft, Doctoral Candidate, Oklahoma State University

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of the influence of early childhood programs on parental involvement and on factors that either hinder or encourage sustained parent involvement after the student moves into elementary school. You are invited to participate in this study because you are the parent of a child who has participated in the Head Start program in this district. Your name and the names of approximately ten other parents were selected from a list of all of the parents whose children have participated in Head Start.

PROCEDURES: You are invited to participate in an interview that will require approximately one hour of your time. During the interview, I will ask questions that are focused on your perceptions and experiences with involvement in your child's education.

Interviews will be recorded via digital voice recorder, and I will take careful notes using pen/paper. The reason that I am recording interviews is so that I can accurately remember your responses. After the interview, I will transcribe the interview into an electronic data file. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript and edit or change any comment that you wish to change. I will include no identifying information on the transcript. In other words, no one will be able to link your responses directly to you. Additionally, no identifying information about you will be reported in the research or reports. All information about the participants will be generic and de-identified.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from participation at any time, and if I ask a question that you do not wish to answer, you may decline from answering that question. Also, your name was chosen from among a number of individuals who could have participated in this study. Therefore, the school will not know exactly which parents participated and which did not. Your name will not be included on any documents other than this consent form. The school will not have access to this document.

No one will have access to the identity of parent participants except my advisor and myself at OSU. Your name will not be included on any reports that are generated from this study. In other words, findings will include only aggregated data.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION: There are no known risks associated with this project that are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION: This study will add to current understandings about the influence of early childhood programs on parent perceptions of involvement. It will also add to understandings about school actions that either support or hinder parent participation in their child's education. These understandings are important because parent perceptions of involvement may differ from school perceptions of involvement. Common understandings could lead to enhanced communication and understanding for parents and schools.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your identity will be kept confidential by keeping answers confidential on recorded transcripts. Participants will be assigned a number at the beginning of the interviews. For example, for my first interview, I will assign the parent the number "1," the second participant will be assigned the number "2," etc. Interviews will be recorded using parent numbers rather than parent names. Any specific information regarding the school or region where the study took place will be de-identified. I will keep a confidential list matching the parent's assigned number with the parent's name. The parent consent forms and confidential list of names and assigned numbers will be kept in a locked office for no longer than 5 years. By signing the consent, you are agreeing to participate in the study. I will provide you with a copy of the consent form. If you have questions about this study, you are encouraged to contact my advisor at OSU, Dr. Katherine Curry or the IRB office at OSU. Their contact information is provided below.

CONTACTS: You may contact any of the researchers at the following addresses and phone numbers, should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study: Stacey Croft, Doctorate Student, Oklahoma State University, stacey.croft@okstate.edu, (580) 884-8670 and/or Dr. Katherine Curry, Assistant Professor-School Administration, Oklahoma State University, katherine.curry@okstate.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB office at 223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS:

I understand that my participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty.

CONSENT DOCUMENTATION:

I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked to do and of the benefits of my participation. I also understand the following statements:

I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix D

Research Questions for Parents

1. What grade is your child in currently?
2. **(HS Parents only)** Could you please describe your experiences with the Head Start program at this school? **(Non HS Parents –** Could you please describe how prepared you thought your child was for kindergarten and what factors helped prepare him/her?)
3. **(HS Parents only)** What do you see as the most important benefits of your child's participation in Head Start (for your child)? (And for you?)
4. **(HS Parents only)** How did Head Start influence you as a parent?
5. What do you perceive your role to be in your child's education?
6. What factors have influenced your perception of your role in your child's education?
7. What are some factors that encourage you to fulfill your role?
8. What are some factors that discourage you from fulfilling your role?
9. **(HS Parents only)** How did your involvement in Head Start influence your perception of your role in the education of your child?
10. How are you currently involved?
11. How important is involvement to you?
12. What are some school factors that influence your participation in your child's education?
13. **(HS Parents only)** How did the Head Start program influence your confidence as a parent on how to help your child in school?
14. **(HS Parents only)** What changes did you experience after your child completed the Head Start program and moved into kindergarten? **(Non HS Parents)** What changes have you experienced in involvement as your child has gotten older?
15. How does your child benefit from your participation? How do you benefit?

16. What advice would you give to the school to encourage more parents to be involved?
17. What advice would you give to new parents?

Appendix D

Research Questions for Administration

1. What is your definition of parental involvement?
2. How would you describe parent involvement in this school?
3. How does your school encourage parent involvement?
4. What are your biggest challenges concerning parent involvement?
5. What can be done to mitigate those factors?
6. Would you please describe your Head Start program at this school?
7. What are the Head Start program's primary goals?
8. How does the Head Start program influence parent involvement?
9. How does Head Start influence parents' understandings about their role in their child's education?
10. How does Head Start influence parent confidence?
11. Would you change anything about the Head Start program here? If so, what would you change?
12. How would you describe differences in involvement between parents whose children have attended Head Start and those that haven't?
13. How can parent involvement be sustained throughout a child's educational experience?

Appendix E

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Thursday, March 10, 2016
IRB Application No ED1634
Proposal Title: The influence of an early childhood program on parental involvement:
Perceptions of former head start parents

Reviewed and Exempt
Processed as:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 3/9/2019

Principal
Investigator(s):

Stacey Croft	Katherine Curry
20635 State Jighway 8	306 Willard
Cherokee, OK 73728	Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

- The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Scott Hall (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Stacey Lane Croft

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE INFLUENCE OF AN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM ON
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: PERCEPTIONS OF FORMER HEAD START
PARENTS

Major Field: School Administration

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education in School
Administration at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May,
2017.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Applied Behavioral
Studies at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 1997.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Special Education at
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 1989.

Experience: Elementary Special Education at Enid Public Schools 1989-1991,
Elementary Special Education/Director at Medford Public Schools 1991-
2001, Middle/High School Special Education/Director 2001-2012,
Elementary Special Education at Enid Public School 2012-2013, Special
Education Pre-K-12th Grade/Director at Burlington Public Schools 2013-
current and Elementary/Secondary Assistant Principal 2016-current